



Independent  
Evaluation  
Office

United Nations Development Programme

# INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION **ARGENTINA**



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# INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION ARGENTINA

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability  
responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
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### INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION: Argentina

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# CONTENTS

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS</b>                                      | <b>vii</b> |
| <b>EVALUATION BRIEF: ARGENTINA</b>                                     | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION</b>                          | <b>3</b>   |
| 1.1 Purpose, objective and scope of the evaluation                     | 4          |
| 1.2 Evaluation methodology   | 4          |
| 1.3 Country context  | 6          |
| 1.4 UNDP in Argentina  | 8          |
| <b>CHAPTER 2. FINDINGS</b>   | <b>13</b>  |
| 2.1 Strategic positioning, added value and partnerships                | 14         |
| 2.2 Productive development outcomes                                    | 18         |
| 2.3 Access to social services and social protection outcomes           | 22         |
| 2.4 Environmental outcomes   | 28         |
| 2.5 Governance outcomes  | 34         |
| 2.6 Cross-cutting issues   | 41         |
| <b>CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE</b> | <b>44</b>  |
| 3.1 Conclusions  | 45         |
| 3.2 Recommendations  | 47         |
| 3.3 Key recommendations and management response                        | 49         |
| <b>ANNEXES</b>   | <b>57</b>  |

## BOX AND FIGURES

|                   |   |    |
|-------------------|---|----|
| <b>Box 1.</b>     | Evaluation questions  | 4  |
| <b>Figure A.</b>  | Programmatic expenditure by thematic area, 2021–2024 (in millions US\$)   | 1  |
| <b>Figure B.</b>  | Sources of funding for the country programme, 2021–2024   | 1  |
| <b>Figure 1.</b>  | Methodological outline and key phases of the ICPE   | 5  |
| <b>Figure 2.</b>  | Argentina’s high inflation rates in recent years. Inflation rate, average consumer prices   | 7  |
| <b>Figure 3.</b>  | UNDP’s country programme expected results and financial scope for the period 2021-2024  | 9  |
| <b>Figure 4.</b>  | Expenditure by fund category, 2021-2024 (in millions US\$)  | 10 |
| <b>Figure 5.</b>  | Expenditure by fund category, 2021-2024 (in millions US\$)  | 10 |
| <b>Figure 6.</b>  | Regional comparison: management cost efficiency ratio, 2021-2024  | 11 |
| <b>Figure 7.</b>  | Reconstructed theory of change. UNDP COM-B model for UNDP in Argentina  | 11 |
| <b>Figure 8.</b>  | Program budget and expenditure by year, 2021-2024 (in millions US\$)  | 12 |
| <b>Figure 9.</b>  | Value-added scheme of UNDP interventions in Argentina   | 15 |
| <b>Figure 10.</b> | UNDP expanded its presence in the northern provinces. Distribution of provinces with the highest relative growth in number of implementing partners | 17 |
| <b>Figure 11.</b> | Outcome 1: Budget and expenditure by year (in millions US\$)  | 19 |
| <b>Figure 12.</b> | Outcome 1: Expenditure by implementing partner  | 19 |
| <b>Figure 13.</b> | Outcome 2: Budget and expenditure by year (in millions US\$)  | 23 |
| <b>Figure 14.</b> | Outcome 2: Expenditure by implementing partner  | 23 |
| <b>Figure 15.</b> | Trends in adolescent fertility rate, 2010-2023  | 26 |
| <b>Figure 16.</b> | Outcome 3: Budget and expenditure by year (in millions US\$)  | 29 |
| <b>Figure 17.</b> | Outcome 3: Expenditure by implementing partner  | 29 |
| <b>Figure 18.</b> | Outcome 4: Budget and expenditure by year (in millions US\$)  | 35 |
| <b>Figure 19.</b> | Outcome 4: Expenditure per implementing partner   | 35 |
| <b>Figure 20.</b> | Citizen Science – Acceleration Lab UNDP Argentina   | 40 |
| <b>Figure 21.</b> | Distribution of projects by gender marker and programme impact  | 41 |
| <b>Figure 22.</b> | Evolution of expenditure distribution by gender marker (in millions US\$)   | 41 |

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

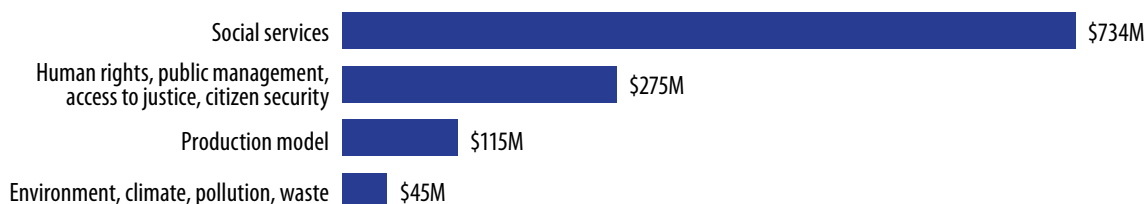
|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>ACBA</b>        | Autonomous City of Buenos Aires   |
| <b>ARBA</b>        | Revenue Agency of the Province of Buenos Aires  |
| <b>BIOFIN</b>      | Biodiversity Finance Initiative   |
| <b>CABA</b>        | Autonomous City of Buenos Aires   |
| <b>CPD</b>         | Country programme document  |
| <b>ECLAC</b>       | Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean   |
| <b>ICPE</b>        | Independent Country Programme Evaluation  |
| <b>IEO</b>         | Independent Evaluation Office   |
| <b>INDEC</b>       | National Institute of Statistics and Census   |
| <b>MRECI</b>       | Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship                                    |
| <b>NFSP</b>        | National Food Security Plan   |
| <b>NIM</b>         | National Implementation Modality  |
| <b>OECD</b>        | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  |
| <b>RBLAC</b>       | Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean   |
| <b>SMEs</b>        | Small and medium-sized enterprises  |
| <b>UFI</b>         | International Financing Unit  |
| <b>UNDP</b>        | United Nations Development Programme  |
| <b>UNPRPD MPTF</b> | United Nations Partnership for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Multi-Partner Trust Fund |
| <b>UNFPA</b>       | United Nations Population Fund  |

# Evaluation Brief: Argentina

Argentina combines a high level of human development with deep territorial and social inequalities. It is the third-largest economy in the region and, in recent years, has made progress in macroeconomic stabilization after periods of very high inflation. However, significant development gaps persist, reflected in persistent poverty rates and their impact on different population groups and regions of the country.

UNDP's cooperation in Argentina has spanned 40 years, prioritizing the national implementation of projects in accordance with the guidelines coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship (MRECIC). During the 2021-2025 cycle, UNDP supported the country in four areas: inclusive and sustainable economic development; improving access to social services and social protection; environmental commitments and risk management; and strengthening governance, transparency, digitalization and access to justice.

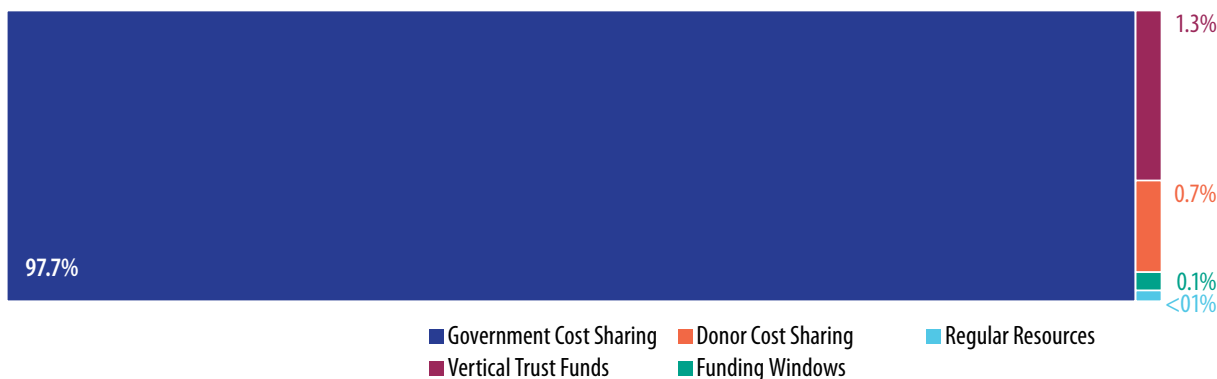
**FIGURE A. Programmatic expenditure by thematic area, 2021–2024 (in millions US\$)**



Source: UNDP IEO

The Argentine government financed 98 percent of the programme. The service delivery capacity of UNDP enabled support to multiple institutions in implementing their national plans and achieving results across a range of public policies, including food security, health, economic development and access to justice. The programme's expenditure execution averaged approximately \$300 million annually.

**FIGURE B. Sources of funding for the country programme, 2021–2024**



Source: UNDP IEO

## Findings and conclusions

The evaluation highlighted the relevance of UNDP's role as an actor capable of facilitating the implementation of public policies. UNDP was recognized for its operational capacity to generate efficiencies and for its project management skills and effectiveness in service delivery. It demonstrated adaptability, both in response to COVID-19 and to various changes in authorities. Its support enabled the country to advance social and health policies, such as food security and the reduction of unintentional adolescent pregnancies. It also supported value chains and promoted small and medium-sized enterprises.

UNDP demonstrated its capacity to mobilize international resources to support the country in fulfilling its international environmental commitments. Likewise, it promoted digital transformation in the public sector and innovation and improved access to justice. Among the identified challenges were the need to give greater visibility to the technical contributions provided, strengthen programme coherence and achieve wider replication of good practices. Additionally, there are challenges in supporting the country to overcome disparities in capacity across its provinces. Strengthening evaluation systems and the relationship with the productive private sector are also priorities.

## Recommendations

To strengthen UNDP's work in Argentina in support of national development priorities, the Independent Country Programme Evaluation made five recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** UNDP should strengthen its partnerships and external communication strategy to enhance partners' understanding of the whole range of development opportunities that UNDP can provide, highlight its strategic role, access alternative funding sources, reinforce its programmatic cohesiveness and prevent risks.

**Recommendation 2:** UNDP should strengthen the internal coherence of its programme, taking advantage of identified opportunities to support the country in the delivery of basic services and socio-economic development. It should take advantage of the holistic approach to development that the new ministerial human capital structure can bring to enhance the desired human development and poverty reduction outcomes. It should promote interprovincial development solutions and facilitate sharing successful practices in institutional modernization, health and economic growth.

**Recommendation 3:** UNDP Country Office should focus its efforts on strengthening private sector support in environmentally sustainable solutions, promoting circular economy, green city models and sustainable finance. Also, it should seek to play a more prominent role in providing solutions to common problems between provinces as well as those of a transboundary nature.

**Recommendation 4:** UNDP should intensify support for justice sector reform, efforts to combat violence and initiatives promoting transparency and fighting corruption. Additionally, it should assist with state administrative reforms, digitalizing public services and strengthening the civil service.

**Recommendation 5:** UNDP should strengthen its capacity to measure the added value it brings in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in project management while strengthening its programme and project results frameworks and evaluation systems to better capture the impact of its interventions.

# CHAPTER 1

# BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



## 1.1 Purpose, objective and scope of the evaluation

Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) compile and analyse evaluative evidence to demonstrate United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) contributions to advancing national efforts and achieving development results in every country. ICPEs are carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.<sup>1</sup>

The objective of an ICPE is twofold: to strengthen UNDP accountability to national stakeholders and to its Executive Board and to promote evidence-based learning to feed into the new country programme.

This is the third country-level evaluation in the Republic of Argentina (hereinafter Argentina).<sup>2</sup> This ICPE covers UNDP work implemented under the 2021-2025 Country Programme Document (CPD)<sup>3</sup> until the end of 2024. The scope of the ICPE includes the UNDP programme in its entirety, from all funding sources, including resources from UNDP, donors and the government. The main audiences for the evaluation are UNDP Argentina, the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC), the UNDP Executive Board and the government of Argentina.

## 1.2 Evaluation methodology

The ICPE adhered to the norms and standards of the UN evaluation group<sup>4</sup> (see details in terms of reference in Annex 1). It had four main evaluation questions (see Box 1 and evaluation framework in Annex 2) and a methodological approach articulated through a sequence of phases, as shown in Figure 1.

The initial desk review was based on an analysis of country context data and an in-depth review of available secondary information, such as project documentation, audit reports and decentralized evaluations<sup>5</sup> (see full list of projects in Annex 3 and bibliography in Annex 4). Additional data sources analysed were the programme's outcomes and outputs indicators (see Annex 5), country programme financial data (see Annex 6) and the geographical data linked to budget execution.

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### BOX 1. Evaluation questions

1. To what extent has the UNDP country programme strategically addressed key national development priorities and the needs of its main stakeholders, including those at risk of being left behind?
  2. To what extent was UNDP able to adapt its positioning and programmatic response to shifts in context and other changes in the operating environment, leveraging comparative strengths?
  3. To what extent were UNDP approaches and interventions successful in achieving the intended objectives of the country programme and contributing to broader, longer-term national development goals?
  4. To what extent did internal and external factors influenced UNDP's ability to deliver its programme efficiently and maximize contributions?
- 

<sup>1</sup> See <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>

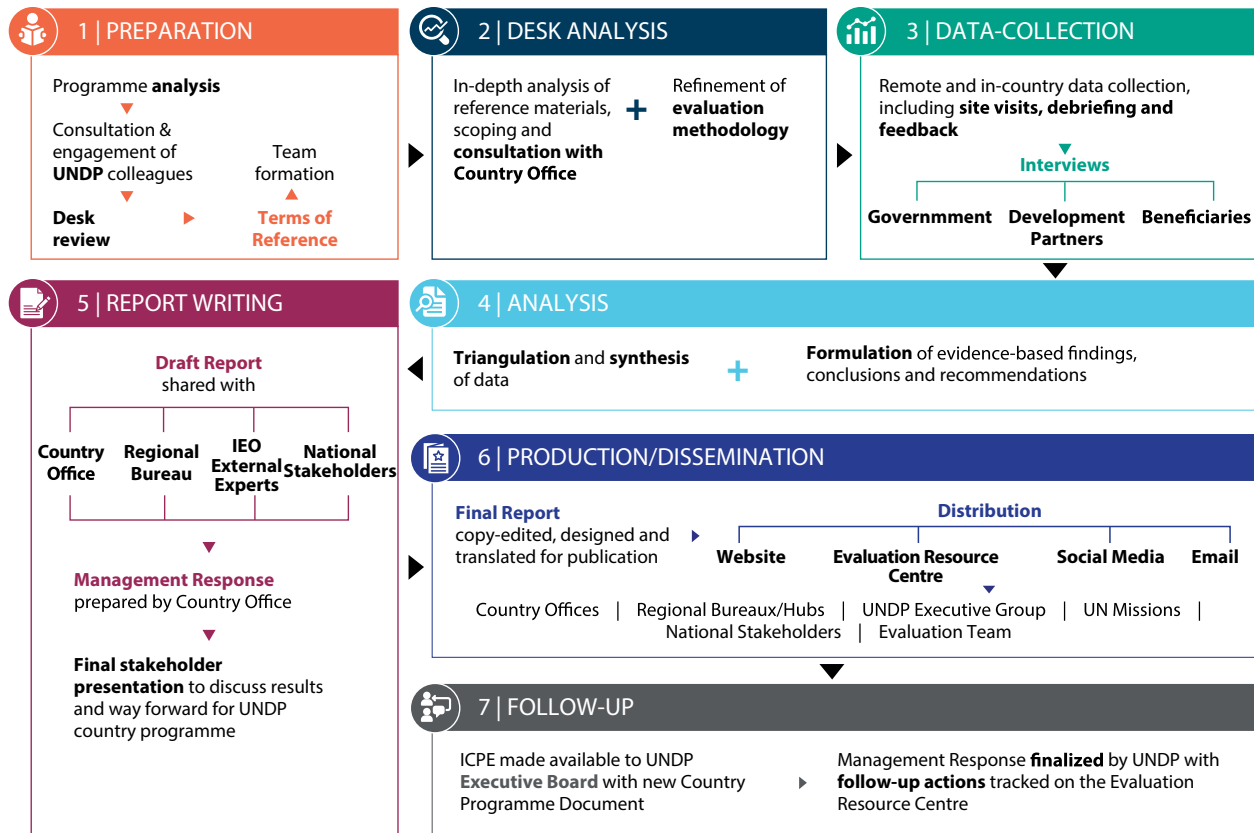
<sup>2</sup> The IEO conducted evaluations in 2009 and 2019. The reports can be found here: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/>

<sup>3</sup> CPD 2021-2025 can be found here: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-08/undp-rblac-ARG-2021-2025-ENG%20%282%29.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> See the United Nations Evaluation Group website: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

<sup>5</sup> Fifteen decentralized evaluations were carried out in the reporting period. The quality assessment of these was: one report was satisfactory, seven were moderately satisfactory, one moderately unsatisfactory and one unsatisfactory. The evaluation reports are available at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/plans/detail/1560>

**FIGURE 1. Methodological outline and key phases of the ICPE**



Source: UNDP IEO

Primary data collection was conducted through a comprehensive preliminary questionnaire to the Country Office conducted in October 2024, discussed and cross-checked during the field mission in November 2024. In that field mission, focus groups and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 160 stakeholders (82 of whom were women). Also, the evaluation team conducted direct observation field trips in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Salta, Jujuy, Cordoba and San Juan with visits to different localities and communities where projects were implemented.

As part of the methodological approach, the evaluation drew on the theoretical framework of contribution analysis.<sup>6</sup> This made it possible to analyse the aggregate causal mechanism underlying the country programme. The resulting assessment was conducted from the triple perspective of the conceptual elements of *Capacity*, *Opportunity* and *Motivation* needed to drive changes at institutional and individual levels. The evaluation also employed a rating system to assess programme results based on the findings presented in the report, using five internationally agreed evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability (see detailed results in Annex 7). A study of UNDP’s gender markers was conducted together with an analysis using the IEO Gender Results Effectiveness Scale.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Mayne, John. 2019. *Revisiting Contribution Analysis*. Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation 34 (2). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337852477\\_Revisiting\\_Contribution\\_Analysis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337852477_Revisiting_Contribution_Analysis)

<sup>7</sup> The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale classifies gender results into five categories: gender-negative, gender-blind, gender-targeted, gender-responsive and gender-transformative.

## 1.3 Country context

Argentina is the second-largest country in Latin America and the Caribbean. With an estimated population of 46.23 million inhabitants, its population density is practically half the regional average.<sup>8</sup> The richness and geographical variety of its territory have their equivalent in terms of human development. The Human Development Index of 0.865 in 2023 ranked the country in the very high human development category, placing it 47th out of 191 countries. However, there were marked inequalities in the distribution of development at the subnational level and asymmetries with respect to vulnerable groups.<sup>9</sup>

Argentina is a federal republic.<sup>10</sup> Public services are provided throughout the country by a decentralized public administration in which the provinces play a leading role. Economically, Argentina is an upper-middle-income country and the third-largest economy in Latin America, yet it is marked by inequality. Access to and quality of basic services such as health, education, justice and security differ in practice between provinces and depend largely on the resources available under the country's fiscal distribution system. Access to fundamental rights and enjoyment of the benefits of development have been characterized by profound territorial, socioeconomic, gender and age inequalities.

Profound socio-economic inequalities persist despite Argentina's economic size and income classification. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INDEC), the poverty rate peaked at 52.9 percent in the first half of 2024 (over 25 million people), with indigence<sup>11</sup> reaching 18.1 percent (about 8 million). In contrast, by the second half of 2024, these figures declined to 38.1 percent (approximately 11.3 million poor) and 8.2 percent indigence (around 2.5 million), reflecting an improvement aligned with the reduction in inflation.<sup>12</sup> However, significant disparities remain: the northern regions, Northeast Argentina<sup>13</sup> and Northwest Argentina,<sup>14</sup> continue to register comparatively higher poverty levels (47.0 percent and 42.8 percent, respectively), while people under 29 years of age have the highest exclusion rates compared to other age groups. An estimated 1.3 million Indigenous people – 2.9 percent of the population – live in Argentina. Most of them live in extreme poverty characterized by limited access to basic services such as health, education, drinking water, adequate housing and employment opportunities.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> According to the National Census of Population, Homes and Dwellings 2022, the province of Buenos Aires is home to around 38 percent of the country's total population. It is the most densely populated jurisdiction. (If the population of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (ACBA) is added to that of the province of Buenos Aires, the percentage rises to approximately 48 percent of the national population.)

<sup>9</sup> See: UNDP, 2022, El Mapa del Desarrollo Humano en Argentina. <https://www.undp.org/es/argentina/publicaciones/el-mapa-del-desarrollo-humano-en-argentina>

<sup>10</sup> The Argentine Republic is a federal state made up of 23 provinces and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (ACBA), whose governors and legislators are elected by direct suffrage and organize and support their own administration of justice.

<sup>11</sup> Belonging to households with insufficient income to cover a food basket capable of satisfying a minimum threshold of energy and protein needs (INDEC).

<sup>12</sup> National Institute of Statistics and Census. (2025), Living conditions. Vol. 9, nº 7, Incidence of poverty and indigence in 31 urban agglomerates. Second semester of 2024.

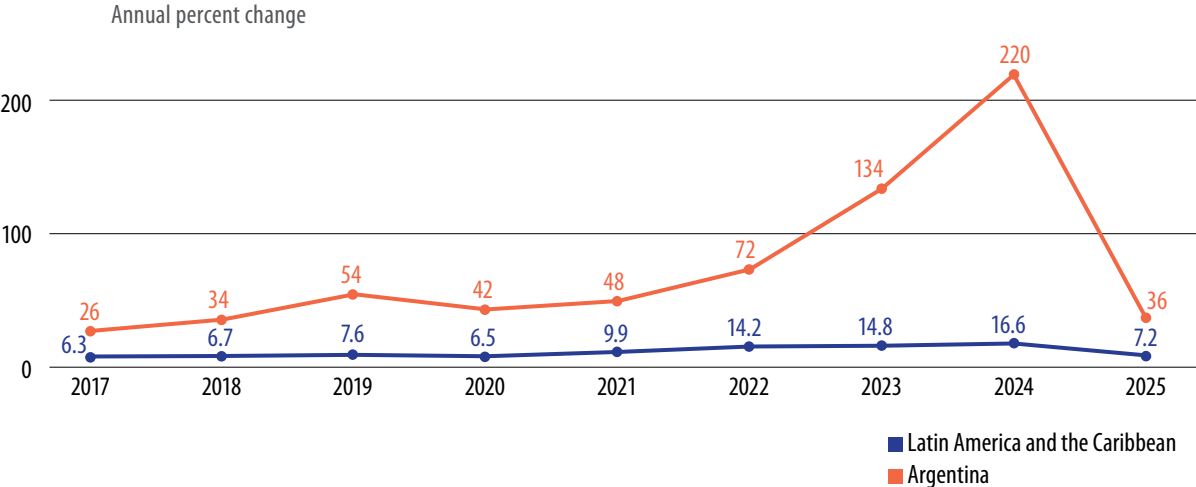
<sup>13</sup> Corrientes, Formosa, Chaco and Misiones.

<sup>14</sup> Catamarca, Tucumán, Jujuy, La Rioja, Salta and Santiago del Estero.

<sup>15</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in Argentina. 2016.

Macroeconomic instability has been a defining feature of recent years, though stabilization efforts have shown early results. Argentina’s economy faced persistent macroeconomic volatility and experienced very high inflation. According to the International Monetary Fund, inflation peaked in 2024, with year-on-year inflation close to 220 percent (see Figure 2). With the change of government in December 2023, a process of macroeconomic stabilization began, bringing the country back into fiscal surplus for the first time in years and reducing monthly inflation from 25.5 percent in December 2023 to 2.4 percent in February 2025. The reduction of public spending affected the structuring of the state and its administration.<sup>16</sup> The new government focused on macroeconomic stability, market deregulation, investment incentives and adjustment policies. It has also been interested in becoming a member state of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a process that started in 2022.

**FIGURE 2. Argentina’s high inflation rates in recent years. Inflation rate, average consumer prices**



Source: IMF 2025

Argentina’s public institutions are central to effective governance, and continued efforts to enhance efficiency, transparency and accountability will be essential to building stronger public trust. Addressing disparities between jurisdictions and within public sectors presents an important opportunity for further progress. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (2020), approximately 80 percent of the population expresses distrust in state institutions.<sup>17</sup> Also, only 37 percent of the population is satisfied with the functioning of democracy.<sup>18</sup> Citizen perception of corruption remains high. In 2023, Argentina scored 37 out of a possible 100 points in the Corruption Perceptions Index, dropping four places in the ranking – from 94th to 98th out of 180 countries – compared to 2022.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The reform of the national state structure has significantly reduced the number of ministries from 18 to eight, eliminating some portfolios such as Women, Genders and Diversities, and creating others, such as the Ministry of Human Capital, which brings together the functions of the former portfolios of Social Development, Labour, Education and Culture.

<sup>17</sup> ECLAC, 2020. Population with little or no trust in political and state institutions, as a percentage of the total population aged 18 and over. [Statistics and Indicators - CEPALSTAT](#)

<sup>18</sup> Latinobarómetro. Report 2023. The democratic recession in Latin America (pp. 25, 27 and 37).

<sup>19</sup> Transparency International. Corruption Perceptions Index 2023. Transparency International Secretariat. Berlin, Germany, 2024. (p. 14)

Access to justice remains unequal and limited for vulnerable populations, weakening the rule of law. There is a cyclical correlation between poverty and lack of access to justice, given that the most vulnerable groups are unable to exercise their fundamental rights because of a lack of institutional coverage where they live or because they are unaware of the channels for enforcing their rights. Until 2024, the country had a strategy of expanding Access to Justice Centres, which offered justice services at the territorial level and whose use aimed to reduce the percentage of people with unmet legal needs.<sup>20</sup>

Argentina took a proactive approach to improving women's political representation, resulting in an increasing proportion of women in the national parliament (from 36 percent in 2016 to 43 percent in 2023).<sup>21</sup> Despite the legal framework for addressing gender-based violence, the country continues to experience high levels of femicide. In 2024, one woman was murdered every 39 hours on average.<sup>22</sup>

With environmental deterioration posing a growing threat to sustainability and livelihoods, Argentina faces significant environmental challenges, including land degradation and desertification; loss of biodiversity and native forests due to the expansion of the agricultural frontier; water pollution; inadequate waste management; and air pollution, all of which are compounded by the impacts of climate change.<sup>23</sup> Argentina managed to double its protected areas in 2018.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, it submitted its second nationally determined contribution in 2020.<sup>25</sup> However, the frequency and severity of extreme weather events intensified. In 2024, the country experienced seven consecutive years of annual rainfall below the historical average,<sup>26</sup> which, combined with increasing temperatures, caused significant losses in agricultural yields and exports<sup>27</sup> and challenged the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural habitats.

## 1.4 UNDP in Argentina

The legal framework for UNDP cooperation in Argentina is the Basic Agreement signed with the Argentine government in 1985 and approved by Law No. 23.396 on 10 October 1986, with character of an International Treaty.<sup>28</sup> The agreement established how "the Government shall be accountable for its development projects supported by UNDP" in line with previous decision by the Governing Council of UNDP that recalled that "countries should be increasingly entrusted with the responsibility for executing UNDP-assisted projects".<sup>29</sup> Years later, the General Assembly reiterated that "national execution should be the norm for programmes and projects supported by the United Nations system".<sup>30</sup>

<sup>20</sup> In the latest published survey, it was noted that, after being attended to, only 16.3% of people stated that they were not satisfied with the advice received or with the outcome obtained. (Study of Unmet Legal Needs, 2019.)

<sup>21</sup> IPU Data. [Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments | IPU Parline: global data on national parliaments](#)

<sup>22</sup> In 2024, there were 228 femicides, including eight trans persons. (Office of Women of the Supreme Court. National Registry of Femicides of the Argentine Justice System. 2024 edition.) Available at: <https://www.csjn.gov.ar/>

<sup>23</sup> Government of Argentina, 2022. <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/ambiente/Desarrollo-Sostenible-y-Gesti%C3%B3n-Clim%C3%A1tica/plan-nacional-de-adaptacion-y-mitigacion>

<sup>24</sup> Government of Argentina, 2018. <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/noticias/2018-record-historico-en-creacion-de-parques-nacionales>

<sup>25</sup> Government of Argentina, 2020. <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/ambiente/Desarrollo-Sostenible-y-Gesti%C3%B3n-Clim%C3%A1tica/la-ciencia-climatica/contribucion-determinada>

<sup>26</sup> National Meteorological Service, 2025. <https://www.smn.gob.ar/clima/anomaliatemprec>

<sup>27</sup> INDEC. 2024. National Directorate of External Sector Statistics and International Accounts

<sup>28</sup> <https://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/20000-24999/22577/norma.htm>

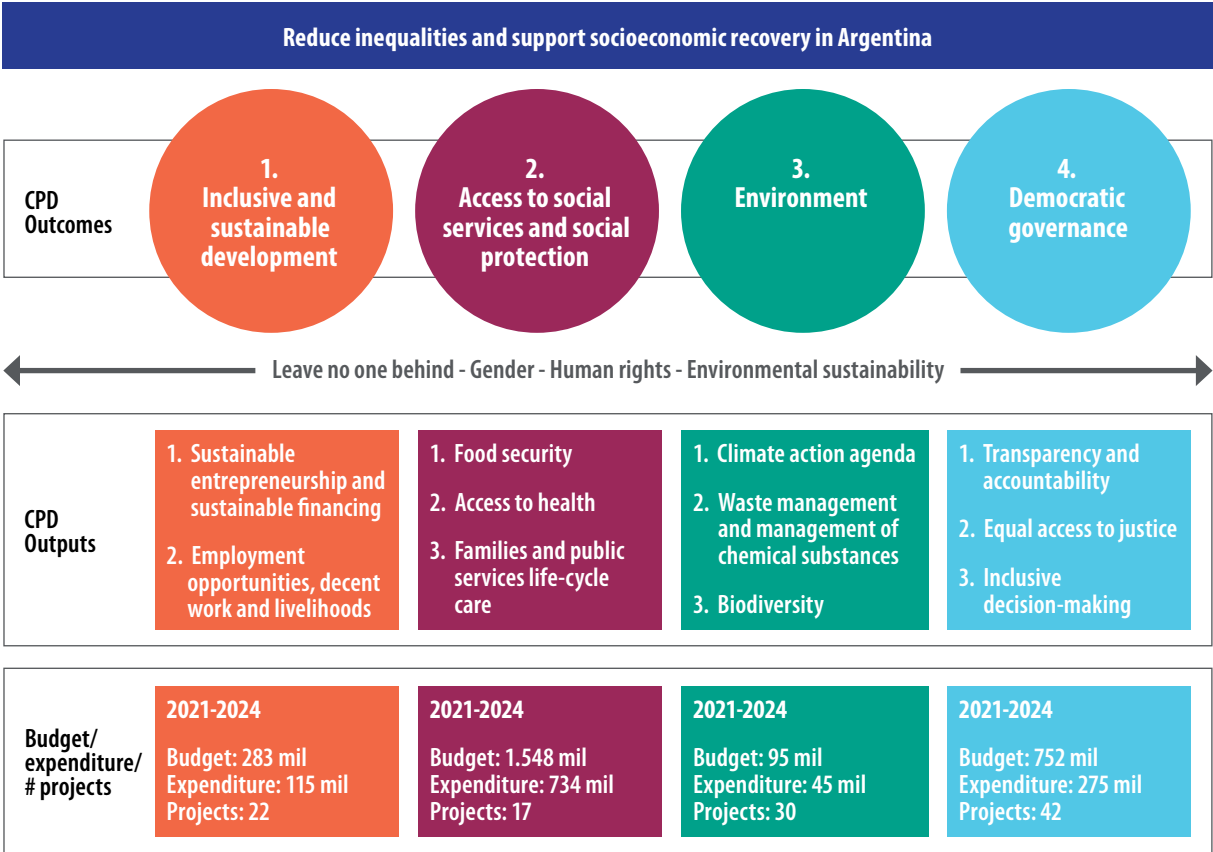
<sup>29</sup> Governing Council of the UNDP decision 76/57 of 2 July 1976.

<sup>30</sup> UNGA Resolution 47/199 of 22 December 1992.

Within this framework, UNDP operates in Argentina following National Implementation Guidelines<sup>31</sup> jointly prepared and ratified by the Secretariat of Coordination and Foreign Planning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship (MRECIC) as the coordinating public body. These Guidelines are regularly updated and enable UNDP to use its system of standardized norms and procedures and to apply its management, oversight and monitoring capacity.

In this cycle, UNDP’s programmatic work in Argentina was guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, jointly signed with the government of Argentina for the period 2021-2025.<sup>32</sup> It also took into consideration UNDP’s strategic plans at the global level for the periods 2018-2021 and 2022-2025. The overall aspiration of the 2021-2025 country programme was to reduce existing inequalities in human development and to support the country’s socio-economic recovery by accompanying public policies for the promotion of growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. The programme’s results framework was organized into four outcomes and eleven outputs (see Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3. UNDP’s country programme expected results and financial scope for the period 2021-2024**



Source: UNDP IEO

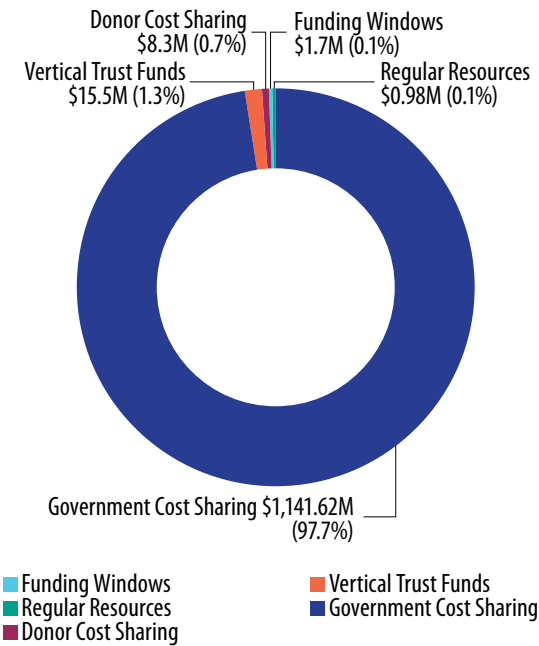
<sup>31</sup> <https://www.undp.org/es/argentina/procedimientos-para-programas-y-proyectos-pnud-de-implementacion-nacional>

<sup>32</sup> <https://argentina.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/MECNUD%202021-2025.pdf>

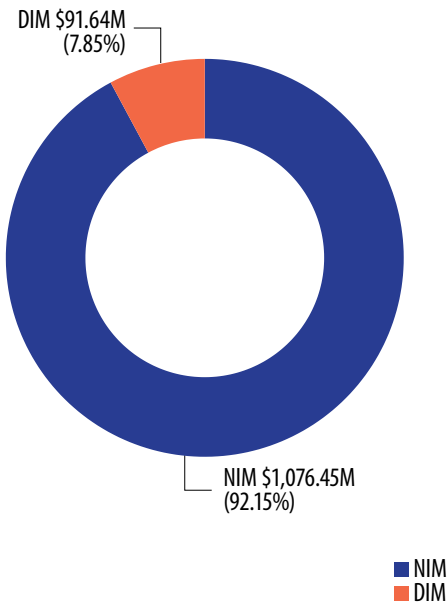
Programmatically in this CPD cycle, UNDP Argentina aimed to support the country in promoting productive enterprises and innovation for sustainable and inclusive economic development. It proposed to contribute to the improvement of social services and social protection by strengthening the capacities of community organizations to ensure food security for vulnerable groups and promoting innovative strategies to ensure access to health for the entire population. In environmental matters, it planned to support the country in its international commitments on climate change, risk reduction and disaster management, strengthening public policies, pollution prevention, reduction and control, waste management and access to renewable energy. In governance, UNDP proposed to boost institutional innovation and digital transformation to promote transparency and accountability, along with improving access to justice and strengthening the rule of law.

The government of Argentina funded 98 percent of the programme (see Figure 4) through a national implementation modality (NIM) for projects (see Figure 5). This created the singularity of a large national implemented programme funded by its own national sources. UNDP service delivery capacity allowed it to support a large variety of institutions regardless of the programmatic area of expertise. Additionally, this modality enabled UNDP Argentina to achieve the region’s highest management efficiency: each dollar spent on programme management supported \$58.7 in programme expenditure, nearly four times the regional average (see Figure 6).

**FIGURE 4.** Expenditure by fund category, 2021-2024 (in millions US\$)

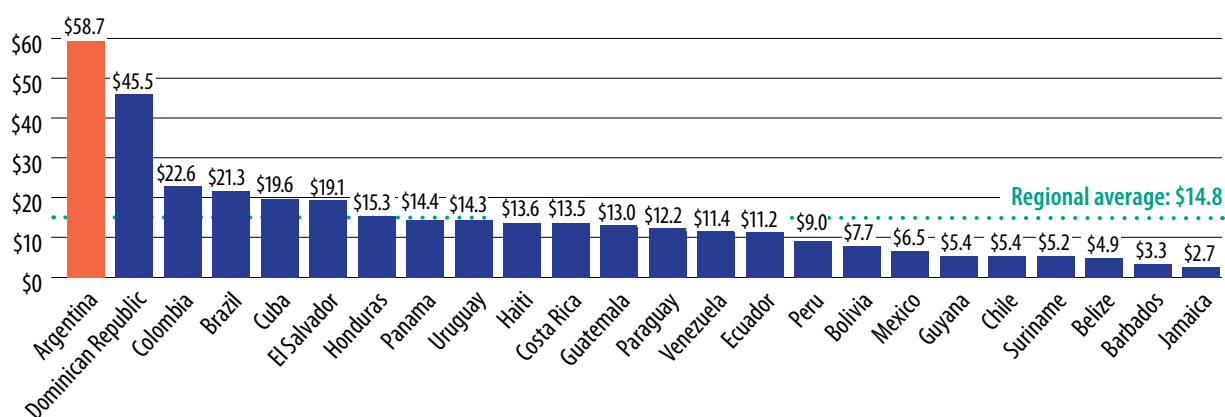


**FIGURE 5.** Expenditure by fund category, 2021-2024 (in millions US\$)



Source: UNDP IEO. Data as of February 2025

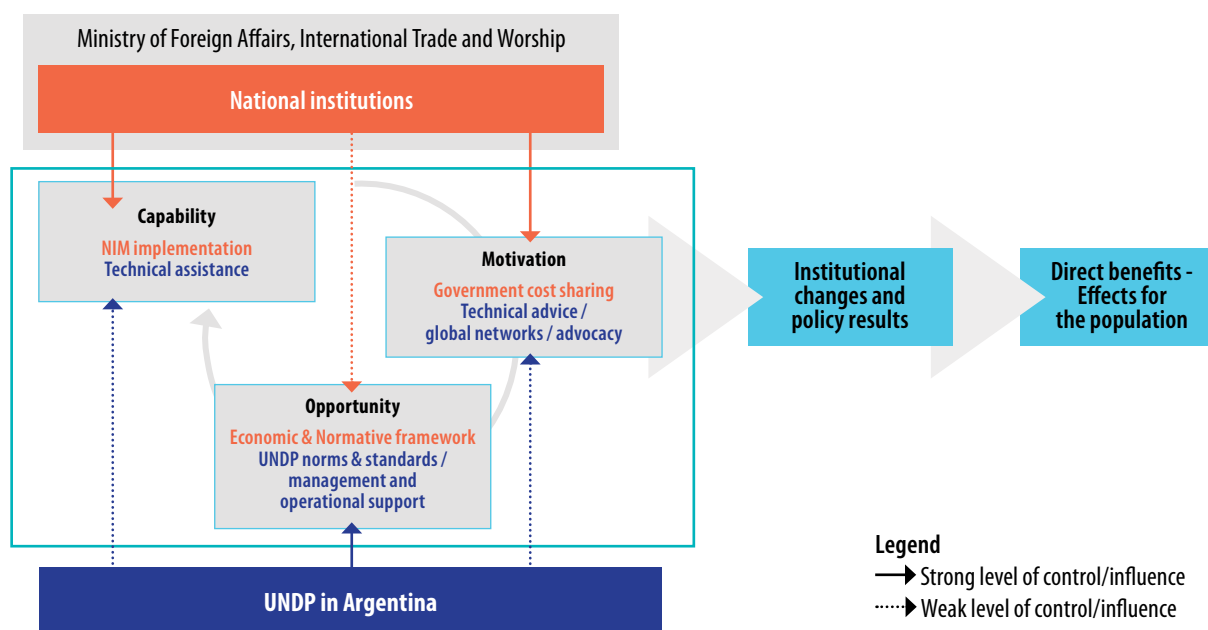
**FIGURE 6. Regional comparison: management cost efficiency ratio, 2021-2024**



Source: UNDP IEO. Data as of February 2025

To understand the rationale for UNDP presence and support to national institutions, the contribution analysis theoretical approach helped to uncover the underlying theory of change of the country programme. In an aggregated manner, it explained the model of collaboration with the government of Argentina and its various federal, state and local institutions. Evidence gathered and observation on the ground highlighted that, while national institutions generally had the *Capacity* (e.g., technicians and specialists, methodological tools, etc.) to implement public policies and the *Motivation* (e.g., political will, strategy, etc.), as evidenced in policy mandates and budget allocations, they often faced limitations related to *Opportunity*. These limitations stemmed from factors such as the adverse macroeconomic environment – e.g., high inflation – and regulatory constraints that hindered implementation. See Figure 7 with explanatory diagram below.

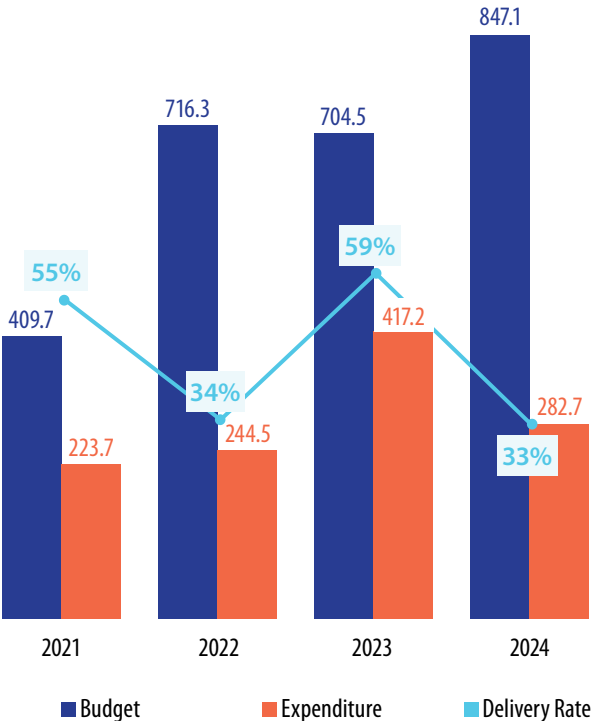
**FIGURE 7. Reconstructed theory of change. UNDP COM-B model for UNDP in Argentina**



Source: UNDP IEO

UNDP’s capacity to assist national institutions to implement its national plans and achieve public policy results has resulted over the years in project partnerships supporting large national programmes in diverse sectors such as food security, health, economic development or access to justice. The country sought UNDP value-added support services to ensure effective and efficient implementation of key national programmes funded with their own resources. From UNDP’s perspective, Argentina’s country programme was the largest in terms of financial delivery in the Latin America and Caribbean region during the evaluation period. The actual programme expenditure for the period 2021-2024 was \$1,195.7 million, far exceeding what was initially planned for the entire cycle, one year before its end.<sup>33</sup> The programme’s expenditure execution averaged close to \$300 million annually, with a low execution rate similar to previous country programme cycles affected by the way project funds are budgeted at national level (see Figure 8).

**FIGURE 8. Program budget and expenditure by year, 2021-2024 (in millions US\$)**

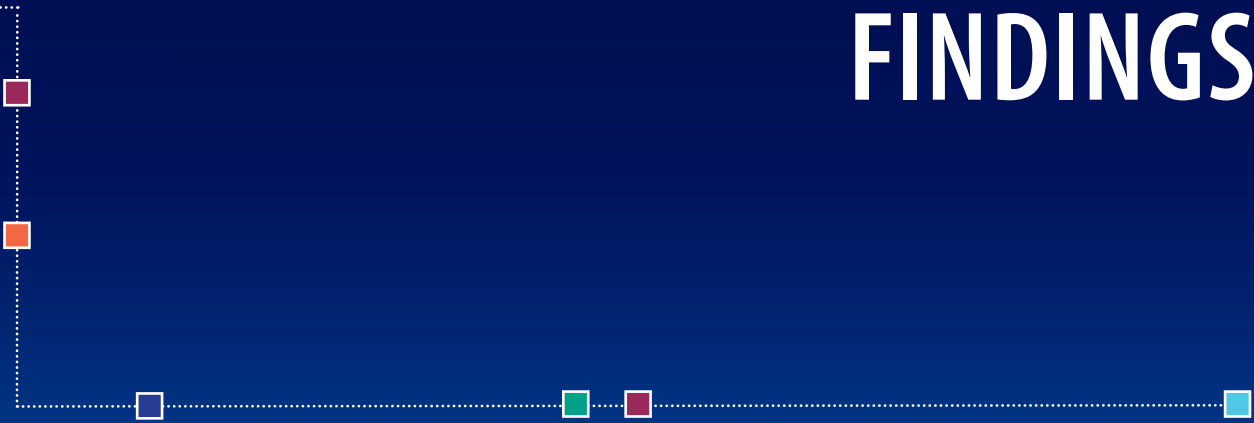


Source: UNDP IEO, February 2025

The UNDP country programme was integrated into the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, providing support to management-level coordinating bodies such as the UN country team, programme team and operations team. UNDP assumed leadership of the inclusive governance working group, served as co-lead for the environmental sustainability working group and actively contributed to several additional groups. Within these frameworks, the scope of UNDP’s portfolio was recognized as both positive and complementary to the activities of other agencies operating in the country.

<sup>33</sup> The estimated budget mobilization for the CPD 2021-2025 was \$832.2 million.

# CHAPTER 2 FINDINGS



## 2.1 Strategic positioning, added value and partnerships

**Finding 1. Strategic positioning.** UNDP in Argentina was supported by its long-standing partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, which served as the coordinator in the formulation and monitoring of national projects funded by the government. This led to tripartite agreements with public institutions at all levels, establishing UNDP as a reliable development partner. UNDP's history as a facilitator of public policy implementation earned it trust across political lines; however, the trade-offs of its collaboration model limited programme coherence and its advocacy role.

UNDP's strategic positioning is closely linked to the twofold characteristic described above of being a country programme financed almost entirely with national funds and of being executed for the most part under a NIM. Both aspects linked UNDP's positioning to public institutions, mainly the executive branch of government at both the federal and provincial levels. The proper management of these two factors made it possible for stakeholders to recognize UNDP as a trusted partner, providing cost-effective operational services and transparency in the management of public funds. This positioning was already identified in previous country programme evaluations and was maintained during this programme cycle. For instance, UNDP facilitated rapid adaptation to institutional needs after the pandemic and after changes in government, as evidenced in the support to the new Ministry of Human Capital<sup>34</sup> and the Ministry of Justice.<sup>35</sup>

The long-standing relationship with the MRECIC played a pivotal role for UNDP. As its presence was required for the formulation of the tripartite agreements that enable UNDP to accompany other public institutions, it was the stakeholder with the best understanding of the scope and possibilities of UNDP's programme to support the country. Through this mechanism, UNDP's ability to accompany institutions and governments regardless of their political affiliation was demonstrated, enabling transitions and continuity of public policies over time.<sup>36</sup> However, there were cases in which, despite the strong relation with the executive branch, progress in certain programme areas — such as Social Security — was limited due to changes in government priorities.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, the strong project-based approach and the concentration of funding sources created weaknesses for UNDP in Argentina. While long-standing projects offered continuity across UNDP programme cycles, the primarily project-based relationship with Argentina's institutions has weakened the programme's internal coherence. Moreover, this limited UNDP's ability to engage with the government in broader and more strategic thinking to address long-term development issues. UNDP's advocacy work was constrained by the concentration of funding sources. While UNDP provided strategic advice and advocacy in the project design stages, this evaluation identified the opportunity to increase the generation of knowledge products, such as the Human Development Map, developed in 2022, to strengthen positioning and advocacy as a thought leader.

**Finding 2. Added value.** UNDP's neutrality, project management and oversight capabilities brought effectiveness and sustainability to the implementation of public policies while its operational support and access to global networks generated efficiencies and savings in the use of public financial resources.

<sup>34</sup> See Finding 6 in this report on how UNDP supported the Ministry of Human Capital to address food security.

<sup>35</sup> See Finding 12 in this report on how UNDP supported the strengthening of criminal justice in the country.

<sup>36</sup> For example, the good collaborations maintained both in the Province of San Juan (*Partido Producción y Trabajo*) and in the Province of Buenos Aires (*Unión por la Patria*).

<sup>37</sup> See Finding 8 regarding the intended work with the National Social Security Administration.

UNDP’s neutrality was an added value in ensuring the continuity of supported public policies and allowed the programme to adapt and expand over time. Stakeholders recognized it as one of the factors facilitating UNDP’s work with a variety of institutions at the national and subnational levels. UNDP’s role as a neutral partner added value at the time of design and implementation of the tripartite agreements, involving the MRECIC and the national institutions requesting UNDP’s support. Moreover, it helped to integrate good international practices at the project design stage and to function as an institutional memory of projects. That aspect enhanced the sustainability of the interventions and proved its value in the face of changes in authorities in multiple cases, ranging from the long-standing economic development work in San Juan to the recent food security efforts together with the Ministry of Human Capital.

Elements linked to UNDP’s project management and oversight capacity contributed to timeliness and transparency in implementation. Those aspects, together with UNDP’s capacity to generate operational efficiencies (see Figure 9 below), were most frequently highlighted by the counterparts. In consultants’ recruitment times, for instance, different counterparts reported on the efficiency in hiring times compared to national procedures and on the ability to attract talent and the required technical profiles. Estimates collected from national counterparts of national procurement processes were six months compared to an estimated two months using UNDP procedures. Procurement management capacity and options for accessing the international market and long-term agreements with suppliers made it possible to improve their agility; generate direct cost savings; minimize the impact of inflation on bidding processes, diversification and access to more competitive suppliers; and generate higher quality bids (value for money). This was especially pertinent during the COVID-19 response and within the health sector. For example, with UNDP support, the Argentine government procured dengue vaccines for the first time, securing a price of \$24 per dose compared to \$80 on the open market.

**FIGURE 9. Value-added scheme of UNDP interventions in Argentina**



Source: UNDP IEO

Public institutions had to carry out their policies and programmes within constraints largely beyond their control. This CPD period included an economic context marked by inflation rates at extraordinary levels and a polarized socio-political landscape with low confidence in the transparency and effectiveness of public institutions. Against this background, UNDP’s involvement led to a wide range of valuable inputs for the partner institutions.

UNDP's programmatic value in Argentina included advocacy and technical advice, which partners found highly relevant, especially during project design. This aspect, associated with the national execution modality, reduced the visibility of UNDP's role as technical advisor, as it concentrated its involvement in the design phase and limited its visibility and measurement during implementation. According to the evaluation team, this situation was linked to some stakeholders' view that UNDP had the potential to adopt a more strategic role. For example, in areas of programmatic intervention like environmental initiatives, efforts were made to maintain national capacities to address evolving international standards and requirements; however, subsequent institutional changes affected these initiatives.

Despite the multiple sources of added value highlighted by stakeholders, UNDP was weak in systematically identifying its contributions to support the relevance of its participation in the implementation of public policies. There was a low systematization of measurements and evidence collected by the Country Office for the accreditation of its value-added. Within projects, the actors involved quickly and clearly identified the problem faced and the type of solution provided by UNDP, but, at the aggregate level, no system was identified in the office for the collection and measurement of these operational efficiencies. It is acknowledged that certain aspects of added value, such as fostering transparency and preventing corruption, are inherently challenging to quantify. In these topics, the absence of evidence to the contrary was the best indicator. A significant case was food policy support. In this policy area, corruption, objective or perceived, and reports of overpricing and inefficient procurement were recurrent, but there was no evidence to indicate that there were any cases directly or indirectly related to UNDP. On the contrary, according to key informants and documentary evidence, UNDP was an active actor in the promotion of transparency and the fight against corruption in the country, as well as an example of good practice.

**Finding 3. Partnerships and geographical presence.** UNDP expanded the number of implementing partners and, in line with the recommendation of the previous ICPE, increased its presence in the northern provinces during this cycle. However, a wide disparity was identified in the degree to which partners were aware of UNDP's programme and their keen interest in learning more about the solutions UNDP can provide was evident. In addition, work with the private sector was territorially circumscribed and there was a weakness in getting partners to replicate solutions, even though they were considered successful in some provinces.

The NIM prioritized working with public institutions, mostly in the executive branch. While this opened the potential to contribute to public policy outcomes, it also limited the capacity to generate projects with other types of actors. During this programme cycle, UNDP worked with 77 implementing partners, a higher figure than in the previous cycle. Around 90 percent of these were federal or provincial ministries.

UNDP demonstrated an active effort to comply with the recommendation of the previous ICPE to expand its contribution in the northern provinces. The recommendation remained valid from the perspective that these are the provinces with the highest poverty rates outside Greater Buenos Aires as reported by the National Institute of Statistics and Census. The geographical distribution of the increase in the number of projects with respect to the previous cycle shows that the highest growth rates were in Catamarca, San Juan, Salta and Jujuy (see Figure 10).

**FIGURE 10.** UNDP expanded its presence in the northern provinces. Distribution of provinces with the highest relative growth in number of implementing partners



Source: UNDP IEO

UNDP prioritized project management and oversight with public institutions rather than maximizing opportunities for direct partnerships with ministries to generate synergies and expand the reach of interventions. Partners who were interviewed cited limited understanding of UNDP's offer and how solutions in other areas could be replicated and expanded in Argentina. A frequent suggestion was for UNDP to share additional international experiences and national-level success stories to facilitate the replication of effective solutions in the provinces. This last aspect was particularly relevant, given that the project portfolio shows few experiences of replication or scaling up of projects.

Although the implementation of public policy projects facilitated natural contact with other agents, such as the private sector, civil society organizations or academia, UNDP's capacity to formulate projects with them was low. This aspect, for example, was highlighted in the analysis of the environmental portfolio, which identified the lack of strong partnerships with the business sector to address issues of national impact, such as land use change. This was relevant, as having the autonomy and ability to implement projects with non-governmental actors could have contributed to risk mitigation at the programme level. For instance, within the environmental portfolio, access to vertical funding sources and UNDP's own resources was an enabling factor. For example, access to Funding Windows enabled UNDP to articulate a novel biodiversity finance solution between a local insurance company and provincial governments, with the participation of local NGOs; this produced the first insurance solution in Argentina to human-wildlife conflicts for jaguar conservation.

## 2.2 Productive development outcomes

**CPD direct effect 1:** By 2025, the population will have benefited from an environmentally and economically sustainable and socially inclusive production model, promoting triple-impact investments, exports and diversification, fostering the interlinkage of science-technology and industry and mainstreaming the person-centred future of work and gender approaches to increase productivity and job creation.

### UNDP CPD outputs:

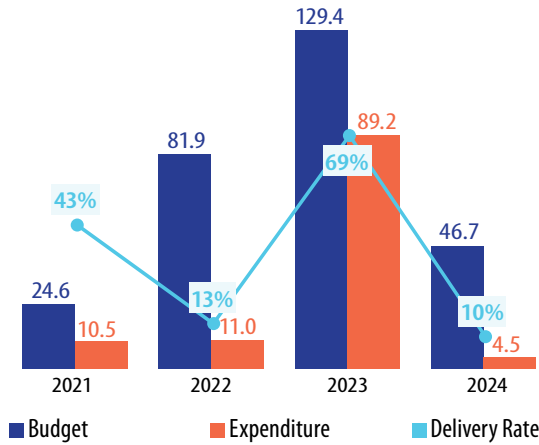
**OUTPUT 1.1:** Development and diversification of sustainable and productive initiatives at the local and regional levels implemented from a gender perspective to foster sustainable entrepreneurship, triple-impact investments and innovation, and driving the green and social economy and sustainable financing.

**OUTPUT 1.2:** Promotion of decent work and livelihoods restoration by improving employment opportunities and capabilities, with a special emphasis on the participation and economic empowerment of women and vulnerable populations.

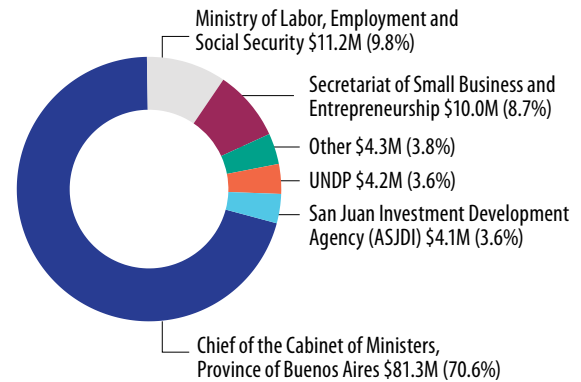
Under Outcome 1, UNDP implemented 22 projects, varying in size, themes and coverage, many of them with continuity from the previous period and mostly under the NIM. It had a total budget of \$282.7 million in the first four years (see breakdown by year in Figure 11). Expenditures implemented amounted to \$115.2 million, representing an implementation rate of 41 percent. The imbalance in the portfolio was that a single project

– the Modernization of Public Administration initiative in the Province of Buenos Aires – accounted for 73 percent of the expenditures in this programme area due to its high procurement burden. Other relevant implementing entities were the Secretariat of Employment and the Secretariat of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Entrepreneurs (see Figure 12).

**FIGURE 11. Outcome 1: Budget and expenditure by year (in millions US\$)**



**FIGURE 12. Outcome 1: Expenditure by implementing partner**



Source: UNDP IEO. Data as of February 2025

**Finding 4. Economic development.** UNDP boosted the development of value chains and SMEs by supporting relevant mechanisms such as the triple-impact approach in the province of San Juan or the promotion of digital transformation. There was a working logic consistent with past programme cycles but also an opportunity to give greater prominence to the role of green finance and to replicate successful public-private partnership models.

UNDP supported Argentina in the introduction of innovative approaches with strong potential for economic development by facilitating the articulation of emerging value chains and strengthening local productive systems, with a primary focus on SMEs. This support was most prominently reflected in the Province of San Juan, where UNDP maintained a sustained and strategic engagement since 2004 and the efforts to diversify the productive matrix achieved significant institutional and territorial results.

UNDP strengthened SMEs in the Province of San Juan as key drivers of inclusive economic development. This long-term collaboration has evolved through a sequential and integrated approach and it has had financial support from the International Development Bank. Throughout the collaboration, UNDP acted as a facilitator, maintained the historical memory of public policies implemented and ensured continuity and the transfer of knowledge and adaptation in project implementation. UNDP has maintained a long-standing partnership with the Province of San Juan, spanning over 20 years. Initially, efforts focused on job creation, laying the groundwork for economic inclusion and social stability. As local capacities strengthened, the emphasis shifted toward boosting production, developing emerging value chains and enhancing local productive systems. In more recent phases, the focus has moved to improving labour productivity through targeted technical assistance, capacity-building and institutional support, helping to consolidate a territorial development model with tangible economic and social impact.

This trajectory culminated in this programme cycle in the adoption of the Triple-Impact Approach, which integrates economic profitability, environmental responsibility and social impact on the community into enterprise development strategies. The approach was institutionalized as public policy in San Juan. It became an example of successful collaboration between the public and private sectors and reflected a deepened partnership between UNDP and the provincial government. Together with the Production Development Credit Programme, which was introduced as a complementary mechanism to facilitate access to finance for SMEs, investment in innovation, certification and sustainability practices was enabled. These two frameworks – the Triple-Impact Approach and the Production Development Credit for Programme – reinforced the province’s productive matrix, promoted public-private collaboration and positioned San Juan as a model for territorial development with high social and environmental returns. This resulted in measurable changes such as increased investments, improved provincial capacity and enhanced collaboration between the public and private sectors. San Juan ranked second nationally in export growth, with a 62.7 percent annual increase in 2024. Given the long history and degree of satisfaction expressed by counterparts with the model, the evaluation found that UNDP’s capacity to promote and replicate the programme in other provinces was weak.

In addition, also in San Juan, UNDP contributed to consolidating the knowledge economy by creating spaces for collaboration among companies, entrepreneurs and research institutions. UNDP improved engagement among actors and enhanced opportunities for development and innovation in business investments. UNDP promoted technology transfer and the emergence of new technology-based companies. It also facilitated access to financing and contributed to the establishment of the foundations for the creation of a technology park in San Juan.

At the national level, UNDP supported the government in emphasizing innovation and expansion of digital transformation of SMEs. The creation of digital transformation units in several provinces was supported by raising awareness and training SMEs in digital technologies and the elaboration of digital transformation plans. The implementation of this initiative was backed by UNDP. UNDP provided technical assistance and resources enabling the creation of these units, but a lack of government funding hindered the implementation of the digital transformation plans. The project was part of a broader government programme designed in collaboration with UNDP to enhance the digital capabilities of SMEs across the provinces. An interdisciplinary network of 300 professionals specializing in Industry 4.0<sup>38</sup> was created and UNDP reported training nearly 2,500 companies, which enabled the formulation of nearly a thousand self-diagnoses of digital maturity and 177 digital transformation plans. A good practice identified was the articulated approach among SMEs, entrepreneurs and academia at the territorial level, which reinforced the sustainability of the interventions, something particularly relevant to facilitate UNDP’s exit strategy in these interventions.

UNDP’s programme on this front faced challenges with replicating and financing public policies. There was no systematic practice of interprovincial cooperation or exchange of knowledge on the results of successful experiences with other provinces. Impact of training activities was limited due to lack of focus on systematic measurement. Regarding the digital transformation drive, the lack of funding for implementation limited its effectiveness. There were opportunities for improvement in the prior securing of access to funds for the implementation of digital transformation plans by SMEs and in the measurement of the effects of the facilitated trainings. Similarly, although UNDP initiated the promotion of green and inclusive finance through the Green Economy Action Partnership initiative, enabling access to funds and resources

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<sup>38</sup> Industry 4.0 refers to the digital transformation of industry through technologies such as the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, big data and robotics.

for sustainable projects and promoting regulatory policies (such as the General resolution 940/22 and 958/23 from the National Securities Commission), partners repeatedly noted that this remains an area of opportunity to foster a more inclusive and environmentally friendly economy.

**Finding 5. Vocational training, socio-occupational inclusion and decent work.** UNDP's projects expanded job opportunities for young people within the formal labour market in a context of unemployment and high informality. It supported the Ministry of Labour and the National Network of Employment Offices in the modernization of their digital platforms and their capacities to provide personalized attention and vocational training courses. The new human capital focused ministerial structure opened an opportunity to comprehensively address structural problems in line with UNDP's efforts to promote multidimensional poverty measurements for decision-making.

UNDP collaborated with different national institutions strengthening their performance in promoting job opportunities for youth in Argentina. This was a relevant area of action of the programme, given that 25 percent of young people between 18 and 24 years of age are neither studying nor employed, according to the Observatory of the Argentine Social Debt of the Universidad Católica Argentina.<sup>39</sup> UNDP acted as the national counterpart for international funding provided by the World Bank on youth employment integration. According to UNDP, institutions supported through the continuous training system and territorial employability agencies of the Secretariat of Employment provided labour training to over one million young people. UNDP's oversight helped the certification of 31 Vocational Training Institutes and the implementation of 30 pilot employment programmes in the framework of the Vocational and Continuing Training Plan for distance and blended modalities. UNDP also supported the implementation of the National Programme 'Conectar Igualdad' through the acquisition of 180,000 netbooks, which reduced the digital divide among sixth- and seventh-grade students in provincial public secondary schools.

At the national level, UNDP facilitated the implementation of institutional modernization and capacity-building initiatives. UNDP strengthened coordination between the Central Unit of the former Ministry of Labour and the Territorial Agencies and Employment Offices by integrating employment promotion programmes into a free, public, nationwide digital platform. There was coherence with the efforts of other international agencies, such as the World Bank mentioned above, which provided funding to national entities for which UNDP facilitated capacity-building for the protection of labour rights and the eradication of child labour.

The spirit of UNDP's support emphasized the consideration of people not only through income, but in a broader scheme of social protection, including labour market and employability. Among other aspects, this was manifested in UNDP's push to position the measurement of multidimensional poverty.<sup>40</sup> However, macroeconomic dynamics through the cycle made it difficult to analyse the appropriateness of interventions. During the last decade, as occurred throughout the region, there was an increase in informality in the labour market with a significant gender and educational gap. This decoupled social protection from formal employment. There was no significant positive trend observed in the data regarding the evolution of income poverty over the period. In this regard, the adoption by the new government of a human capital theory perspective was identified as an opportunity for UNDP to support the promotion of interventions, addressing critical areas such as early childhood, health, education and labour market insertion from the early years, in integrated policies under the same portfolio.

<sup>39</sup> <https://uca.edu.ar/es/observatorio-de-la-deuda-social-argentina>

<sup>40</sup> This was done in Chaco and in CABA, where an experimental design was carried out together with the Institute of Statistics and Census for the measurement of dimensional poverty, demonstrating the high potential of the indicator to guide public policies with a focus on people facing multiple deprivations.

## 2.3 Access to social services and social protection outcomes

**CPD direct effect 2:** By 2025, the country will have improved regulatory, policy and fiscal frameworks that will be gender- and rights-sensitive to ensure an inclusive, quality supply of basic social services in health, food security, education, care, protection, housing and justice. These frameworks will respect the environment and all cultural dimensions and pay special attention to the most disadvantaged territories and populations.

### **UNDP CPD outputs:**

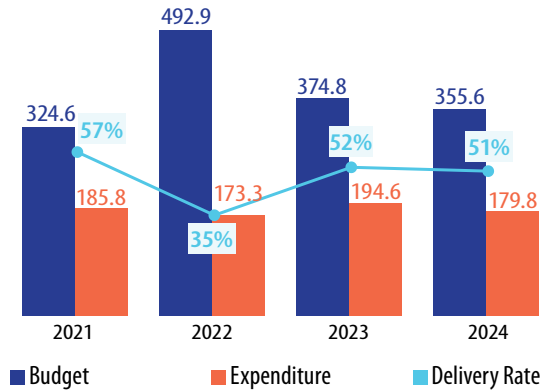
**OUTPUT 2.1:** Capacities developed in community organizations to ensure food security for the vulnerable population through regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food and other community and productive services associated with the gender and diversity approach.

**OUTPUT 2.2:** The Ministries of Health at national and subnational levels can provide equal access to health and a healthy environment, addressing emerging diseases, with an emphasis on perinatal and pregnant women's health, disabilities, prevention and treatment of chronic noncommunicable and communicable diseases (including HIV-specific services), access to sexual and reproductive health and prevention of unintended adolescent pregnancy.

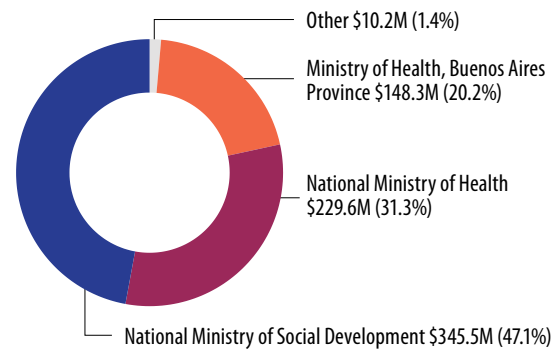
**OUTPUT 2.3:** Families and public services are strengthened to create a comprehensive life-cycle care system with co-responsibility in partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations.

Outcome 2 consisted of 17 projects, with a total budget of \$1,547.8 million and cumulative expenditure of \$733.5 million in the first four years of implementation (see Figure 13 for a breakdown by year). It is significantly the area of work with the largest financial volume and had an implementation rate of 47 percent. The financial results of this outcome are concentrated in three large projects that represent 93 percent of the expenditure and that respond to the support UNDP provides for the implementation of public policies related to the community approach against hunger, universal health coverage and the improvement of public health in the Province of Buenos Aires. Key implementing partners included the Ministry of Social Development, the Undersecretary of Food Policy, the National Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Health of the Province of Buenos Aires (see Figure 14).

**FIGURE 13. Outcome 2: Budget and expenditure by year (in millions US\$)**



**FIGURE 14. Outcome 2: Expenditure by implementing partner**



Source: UNDP IEO. Data as of February 2025

**Finding 6. Food security.** UNDP contributed to improving access to food for the most vulnerable population through its support to the implementation of the National Food Security Plan. Efficient funds management, transparent administrative processes and adherence to UNDP’s quality standards enabled timely food delivery and cost savings. These efficiencies facilitate the provision of food services and the expansion of community-level care networks. However, the continuity of the community-based approach was conditioned by the priorities of the new authorities.

UNDP continued during this evaluation period to provide an instrumental operational framework to enable food security for the vulnerable population from a community approach. It is important to contextualize that food policy in Argentina was historically designed with programmes that emerged to address emergencies, and had a limited institutionalization.<sup>41,42</sup> From this context, the government of Argentina decided in 2005 to implement a community-based approach against hunger in collaboration with UNDP. Since then, the project evolved into the National Food Security Plan (NFSP), supported by UNDP, in partnership with the former Ministry of Social Development, currently the Ministry of Human Capital. Among other results, this partnership made it possible to formalize many community kitchens and overcome the lack of efficiency in the transfer of funds by the government to them. In the past, this issue prevented the rapid implementation of the necessary actions for timely and appropriate food delivery. According to comparative evidence, UNDP’s experience and operational capacity resulted in changes to processes and efficiency within the programme, in comparison to similar processes outside of UNDP’s involvement. Key informants noted that UNDP’s strong oversight, effective project implementation and lower cost set it apart as a valuable partner.

UNDP’s adaptability made it possible to incorporate improvements in implementation and expand the scope of programme coverage. The nature of the partnership enabled the gradual integration of the highly qualified technical staff initially contracted by UNDP as consultants for the implementation of the project into the national institution, thereby strengthening its technical teams by over 200 people over the course of the project. The oversight function conducted by UNDP requires a constant monitoring exercise, with

<sup>41</sup> Public policies and institutionalization of food security: an exploration of the state of play in Argentina. 2013. Cuad. Der. Ambiental N° 4, PMD

<sup>42</sup> A Critical Evaluation of Food Programmes in Argentina by Enrique O. Abeyá Gilardon. SciELO - Salud Pública - Una evaluación crítica de los programas alimentarios en Argentina Una evaluación crítica de los programas alimentarios en Argentina

bimonthly transfers of funds to community organizations that are accountable monthly. These processes have, over time, improved the ability of social organizations to establish and manage formal community kitchens. One result has been an increase in the number of legally established community kitchens operating in Argentina to meet food needs. By the close of 2023, a total of 3,049 community kitchens were in operation, representing a substantial growth observed throughout the pandemic period.<sup>43</sup> During the pandemic, UNDP supported the mobilization of additional funds and the implementation of prevention measures and protocols for dealing with COVID-19 positive cases, ensuring the continuity of food services and the protection of beneficiaries' health. Canteens that distributed dry food were included in the network, mainly through the partnership with Caritas Argentina. This change allowed food distribution to continue in a safe manner, preventing the spread of COVID-19 while ensuring that vulnerable populations continued to receive support. In 2021, 1,726,076 people accessed these services and, in 2023, the number increased to 4,832,448 people, representing about 10 percent of the country's population.<sup>44</sup>

Sustainability was considered through the development of community support networks for people living in poverty and with food insecurity. This work resulted in improvements to the infrastructure and access to canteens and the meeting of minimum hygiene and safety conditions for all services falling under the support network. The government transition in late 2023 led to a review of food policy, but UNDP remained effective in supporting the new Ministry. Stakeholders observed that UNDP reduced the average time to sign financing agreements with social organization-run canteens from 90 days to 14. This is important, as annual collaboration agreements must be renewed with over 1,500 canteens. It also helped to achieve fiscal savings and to expand the list of suppliers; for instance, in 2024, the use of UNDP's long-term agreements with international suppliers allowed savings procuring milk and rice products for the programme, resulting in an increase of 40 percent in the provisions of canteens. Regarding UNDP's support to food security in Argentina over the years, key informants and documents reviewed indicated that UNDP actively promoted transparency, efficiency in the management of public resources and the fight against corruption in the country.

The community model also brought wider social and economic benefits, adding value beyond transactional approaches. UNDP's gender lens further empowered women within the programme. Eighty percent of community kitchen workers were women, who received targeted training and leadership opportunities. Interviewed participants noted higher self-esteem, improved family support and increased economic independence. Participation in the programme also reportedly generated motivation and facilitated the completion of primary and secondary education for many participants – in some cases, the completion of university, with a consequent improvement in the employment prospects of these individuals. Finally, care initiatives, where community organizations have been able to expand the type of services they offer, supported, for example, the care of children from environments affected by drug addiction, alcoholism or parents deprived of their liberty and offering recreational and educational activities.

Among the elements for improvement identified was the need to strengthen the evaluation frameworks linked to the programme in order to obtain more robust evidence to measure the overall impact of the programme in its different facets. There is also a need for more disaggregated information on the organizations that distribute dry food. Although the UNDP project, together with the Ministry, has made progress towards geo-referencing, it did not have the same level of disaggregation of information on impact. Another unresolved issue was the monetary compensation of the voluntary work of the employees

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<sup>43</sup> Before the pandemic, there were about 1,500 canteens providing services on site.

<sup>44</sup> According to data from the UCA's Social Debt Observatory, 24.7 percent of the population experienced varying degrees of food insecurity in 2023, of which 10.9 percent experienced hunger.

of the community canteens and soup kitchens, as their absence compromises the sustainability of the services. UNDP advocated for this and, in this programme cycle, ensured that at least a quarter of the 12,000 canteen workers received economic incentives.

**Finding 7. Strengthening the health system.** UNDP played a key role in supporting the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and was also recognized by key stakeholders for its effective role in the national success story of reducing unintended adolescent pregnancy. Although UNDP contributed to strengthening coherence in the implementation of internationally funded health projects by promoting management mechanisms and the provision of key medical supplies, persistent structural challenges, such as the development of financing for the decentralized model and the strengthening of the first level of care's response capacity, affect the health system.

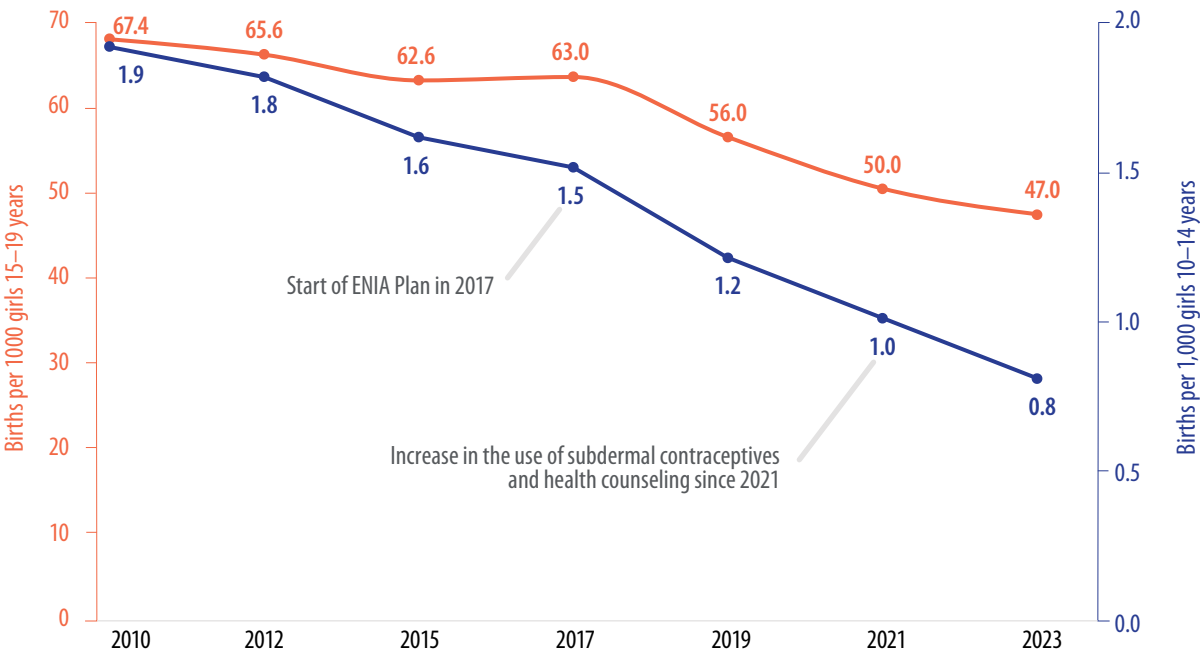
UNDP's range of work in support of health institutions was broad, with different scales of results. At the national level, it supported the Ministry of Health in expanding effective universal health coverage, with a role in the process of guaranteeing the provision of critical inputs, enhancing transparency and enabling access to international markets. It also provided technical assistance to the Ministry in the creation of the International Financing Unit (UFI) to organize international financing and in the prevention of teenage pregnancy through the National Plan for the Prevention and Reduction of Unintended Pregnancy in Adolescence, carried out by the Secretariat for Access to Health. At the subnational level, among other aspects, it supported the Ministry of Health of the Province of Buenos Aires in optimizing the integrated health system through the establishment of the Comprehensive Health Record, which enabled 40 provincial hospitals to have full traceability of patients between different levels of care.

UFI's creation in the Ministry of Health allowed the country to integrate funding from various projects, mainly from the World Bank and the International Development Bank. UNDP ensured the transparency and effectiveness of the process of international financing, allowing the integration of different sources of funding. National ownership and sustainability of the intervention were manifested in the conversion of the implementing unit into the Secretariat of Administration within the Ministry. The remaining challenge was to replicate and decentralize the model to the provinces.

One of the differentiating aspects of UNDP's support in these processes is its procurement capacity. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP demonstrated prompt and effective action by supplying two million early detection kits and assisting in the vaccination of 27 million individuals in the Province of Buenos Aires – the nation's largest province, representing over one-third of Argentina's total population. The training of 300 staff in pandemic management or the procurement of 33,000 CO<sup>2</sup> meters that enabled the safe opening of schools exemplifies UNDP's comprehensive approach. The procurement of essential medical supplies, including 344 ambulances, CT machines and MRIs for all 23 provinces and CABA, demonstrated UNDP's capacity to deliver goods and services during times of crisis, contributing to improvements in health service response and infrastructure. There was consensus that working with UNDP in Argentina generated numerous benefits, especially in the context of a market characterized by exchange rate volatility. UNDP allowed access to a larger number of international suppliers, increasing competitiveness and, consequently, making it possible to obtain better prices for goods and services. National counterparts reported how comparative analyses carried out by the Ministry between purchases managed outside the UNDP framework and those made through UNDP showed a cost reduction of approximately 60 percent in favour of transactions mediated by UNDP.

Programmatically, a particular case of success was the prevention of unintended adolescent pregnancy in Argentina. UNDP, jointly with other UN agencies, supported the National Plan for the Prevention and Reduction of Unintended Pregnancy in Adolescence (ENIA Plan). By taking an intersectoral approach that integrated education, access to services and contextual analysis, the project managed to address this complex problem. UNDP managed the procurement of 172,000 subdermal implants and the training of 2,500 National Plan health workers and teams in a comprehensive and rights-based approach. Improved access to contraceptive methods, especially long-acting methods such as subdermal implants, made a notable difference. It allowed greater autonomy in decision-making and addressed logistical and economic barriers that previously limited their use. The ENIA Plan resulted in a significant outcome (see Figure 15).

**FIGURE 15.** Trends in adolescent fertility rate, 2010-2023



Source: ENIA Plan data

As a national public policy, its continuity and sustainability depended on government priorities. In this case, the ENIA Plan was left with an uncertain outlook, marked by adjustments in the number of professionals dedicated to the provision of sexual and reproductive health counselling in school and community contexts. The interviewed counterparts pointed out the risk of generating important setbacks in the advances achieved and to the vulnerability of young women in contexts of social and economic inequality.

The complexity of the health system has led to the identification of multiple challenges that remain. Among them is the need to improve the logistics and distribution of medical supplies. While UNDP advised and trained the Ministry in improving procurement specifications and optimizing logistical processes, the need for substantial change at the institutional level remained. Likewise, guaranteeing minimum common quality standards in the country’s first level of care and the need to address the system’s budget deficits remained major challenges that UNDP could address.

**Finding 8. Integrated care systems.** UNDP support contributed to ensuring early childhood rights and access to services and nurturing areas for vulnerable families. It also promoted children's social inclusion through sport. Although UNDP demonstrated an ability to adapt and ensure the relevance of its social protection projects in the face of changing approaches by government partners, effectiveness in meeting planned objectives was negatively affected, reflecting the challenges inherent in changing political contexts.

UNDP supported a diverse group of initiatives that sought to strengthen public services in support of families and thereby contribute to a comprehensive care system based on a life-cycle approach. It provided technical and operational support to the 'First Years' project in partnership with the National Secretariat of Childhood, Adolescence and Family, relevant in its focus on improving services for vulnerable families with young children and pregnant women. As a result of the project, parenting zones were established throughout the country, enabling families to access workshops on feeding, breastfeeding and conflict resolution. A service of facilitators made it possible to carry out needs assessments for families and to guide them to the necessary services and resources. The project reported 86,000 vulnerable families with children under four years of age who were supported and guided under an approach of access to their rights. A good practice that led to a progressive accumulation of experience was the promotion of rights from a participatory approach, concretized in the community meetings held in parenting zones.

UNDP also supported the implementation of technological solutions to improve early childhood management and monitoring. Together with ECLAC, it supported the National Tax and Social Identification System in the design of the Early Childhood Information and Monitoring System. The Early Years Information System was implemented, providing the country with a technological platform for the periodic survey, processing and presentation of quantitative and qualitative information on the work of child-rearing spaces throughout the country.

Initiatives for the social inclusion of children through sport stood out for their novelty in UNDP's work portfolio. In alliance with the River Plate Foundation, it implemented the 'Values on the Field' programme to promote personal and social values, providing young people with personal tools that allow them to successfully integrate into society. The systematization of the programme, supported by UNDP, made it possible to document and make visible its development, highlighting the positive impact it had on the promotion, through sport, of a space for values in children, adolescents and families living in socially vulnerable situations. The evaluation assessed the model as having a high potential for replication in other clubs, organizations and institutions. The experience made it possible to hold the First International Congress on Football for Inclusion and Development in March 2024, where the Charter of Commitment for Sustainable Development and Inclusion through Football in South America was signed, giving rise to a Network of Clubs for Social Inclusion.

In other interventions, UNDP worked with different provinces and municipalities to promote greater inter-institutional and multisectoral coordination. Part of this work was articulated under the umbrella of the Sustainable Development Goals and the way in which different institutions located and followed up and monitored their social programmes. UNDP in this area supported the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies, enabling the creation of common databases and the development of systems of dialogue among the different levels of government to ensure the effective delivery of social protection to people in vulnerable situations. It was important that UNDP's role helped the transition between administrations and was able to adapt to the change in approach of the new governmental partners.

However, UNDP was unable to achieve the desired results in the field of social security. Collaboration with the National Social Security Administration, one of Argentina's largest public sector institutions in terms of social expenditure management and population coverage, to introduce a management model

guaranteeing social inclusion with a rights-based approach, was unsuccessful. This line of intervention was no longer a priority for the new authorities. This case was a good reflection of the challenges and risks inherent in UNDP's model of collaboration with the country, due to political change.

## 2.4 Environmental outcomes

**CPD direct effect 3:** By 2025, the population will have benefited from the country's progress in implementing its environmental regulatory frameworks, based on policy strengthening for climate action, prevention, reduction and control of pollution, waste management, disaster risk management, energy and sustainable development and sustainable production and consumption. Nature-based and evidence-based solutions will be promoted and human rights, intersectoral and gender approaches will be mainstreamed.

### UNDP CPD outputs:

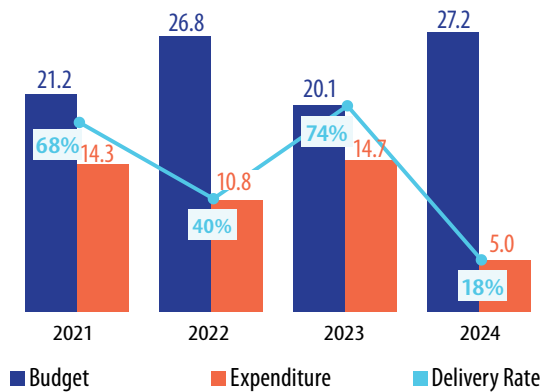
**OUTPUT 3.1:** The Ministry of Environment can implement and follow up the climate action agenda, contributing to the achievement of the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework and the commitments undertaken at the international level, promoting intersectionality, gender equality and intergenerational equity.

**OUTPUT 3.2:** Rational management of chemical substances and products, as well as waste management, implemented at the national and subnational levels to protect human health and the environment, taking into account the gender differences and contributing to compliance with international conventions.

**OUTPUT 3.3:** National and subnational public capacities for protection and sustainable use of biodiversity fostered to protect the environment and ensure human health and livelihoods, in an intersectoral manner, and with the participation of women, local farmers (male and female) and the Indigenous peoples in the country, in compliance with international conventions.

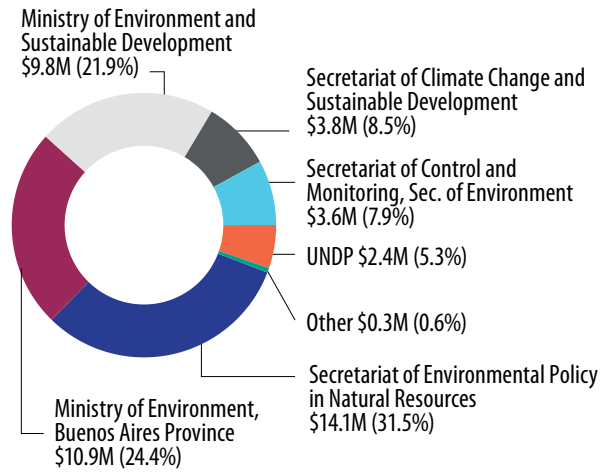
In this cycle, Outcome 3 was the smallest UNDP country programme area in financial terms, with a total budget of \$95.3 million (see Figure 16) spread over four programme outputs and 30 projects. Expenditure amounted to \$44.9 million, representing an implementation rate of 47 percent. It had a relatively balanced portfolio structure with six projects accounting for 81 percent of expenditure. It is the most diverse portfolio in terms of donors and source of funds, with funding from the government of Argentina, the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund and UNDP's own funding windows (see Figure 17). It was the portfolio with the greatest variety in implementation modality, incorporating a significant number of UNDP direct implementation projects, reflecting a weakness in institutional capacities in this programme area. The approach of the projects was mixed, ranging from advisory-level interventions for policy development to direct interventions with rights holders.

**FIGURE 16. Outcome 3: Budget and expenditure by year (in millions US\$)**



Source: UNDP IEO. Data as of February 2025

**FIGURE 17. Outcome 3: Expenditure by implementing partner**



**Finding 9. Climate and energy.** UNDP strengthened institutional capacities in environmental management and adaptation, natural disaster prevention and access to renewable energy sources. It provided technical and operational assistance to support the implementation of public policies and institutional mechanisms, yet the absence of robust mechanisms for measuring medium-term results remained the main difficulty in attributing significant changes directly associated with support at the public policy level.

In the area of climate, UNDP facilitated the presentation of the National Adaptation and Mitigation Plan at COP 27, supported by sectoral studies in energy, forests, transport and health, as well as the estimated investment needed to achieve a net emissions reduction by 2030, which was 27.7 percent higher than the ambition expressed in the 2016 Nationally Determined Contribution. UNDP provided advice and technical support to the institutions in charge of monitoring other international agreements such as the Escazu, Nagoya, Sendai, Stockholm and Minamata agreements. In different interventions, UNDP played a facilitating role in accessing international cooperation funds linked to international agreements and in facilitating the participation of different social actors. Although UNDP recognized, during the design phase, the importance of considering how climate impacts affect women differently, and the projects with vertical funds had specifically gender strategies and plans, this area was found to require further programmatic attention. In particular, more targeted efforts are needed to promote sustainable livelihoods and support productive development for rural and indigenous women.

UNDP facilitated evidence-based decision-making for disaster risk prevention and management. It provided technical advice to consolidate an Environmental Information System for decision-making on fire outbreaks in the Paraná Delta. It also developed models for the definition of potentially flood-prone areas using digital elevation models and for the updating of social vulnerability indices for disasters in coastal cities along the Uruguay River in the province of Entre Ríos. In the province of Buenos Aires, UNDP enabled access to renewable energy sources (see Case study below) and, as a result, capacity-building of provincial procurement teams, which autonomously replicated procurement for new solar installations, such as in the Villa Fiorito Solar Park.

The lack of robust mechanisms for measuring medium-term results made it difficult to attribute significant changes directly associated with the policies and strategies worked on. Corporate mechanisms such as Mid-Term Reviews and Project Implementation Reviews provided valuable tools for tracking project-level results on an annual basis. The sustainability of some of the lines of work was challenging, given the reorientation of priorities of the new federal authorities at the time of this evaluation.

### Case study #1: Solar energy: less noise, more security, better education.

**Technical assistance for the procurement of batteries and solar panels, and the quality of UNDP's international suppliers, helped ensure the right to education in rural settings through the electrification of schools and the consequent elimination of hazards and noise pollution from combustion engines.**

With the aim of guaranteeing the right to education, improving safety and reducing rural uprooting and the digital divide, the province of Buenos Aires has set out to promote clean energy solutions in rural schools. After identifying the lack of progress in the programme (inflation and management time left tenders empty) and the shortcomings of the local supplier market (obsolete technology and high cost), UNDP was approached to unblock the project.

By providing technical assistance to the province's technical staff, reformulating the bidding process and leveraging UNDP's international procurement network, the province of Buenos Aires was able to complete the full cycle—from tender to installation—in just 18 months (December 2022 to April 2024). International suppliers offered batteries at approximately \$1,850 per unit, compared to \$5,000 in the domestic market, resulting in cost savings of around 60 percent. These savings, combined with improved battery quality (10-year lifespan versus five years locally), enabled the project to reach 22 rural schools—more than double the original target of 10.

The impact on the ground was equally significant. During the direct visit to the school in Castelli, staff reported immediate improvements in student well-being and learning conditions. The replacement of combustion engines with solar energy reduced noise and safety risks, while permanent Wi-Fi access helped bridge the digital divide and enabled collaboration with schools in other provinces. The school also saw increased enrolment, contributing to efforts to reduce rural depopulation and strengthen the right to education in remote areas.

**Finding 10. Waste and chemical management.** Argentina updated different elements of its regulatory framework and strengthened capacities for chemical risk management with technical support from UNDP, resulting in enhanced compliance with international agreements and reduced health risks. In parallel, UNDP engaged at the subnational level, where it identified persistent gaps such as unequal capacities in the laboratories of the national system for the design and implementation of a chemical monitoring programme, a lack of funding sources for the elimination of plastics and a not yet fully developed commitment within the business sector to implement a circular economy system.

In updating and strengthening regulatory frameworks and policies for chemical and contaminant management, UNDP contributed by providing technical and operational support to different federal initiatives. UNDP facilitated progress in the revision of the Draft National Law on Chemical Risk Management through technical support provided to the Inter-Ministerial Roundtable on Chemicals. It also supported

the work on the National Strategy for the Implementation of the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register and supported the updating of the National Register of Polychlorinated Biphenyls Procedures and the National List of Existing, Restricted and Banned Substances. From the perspective of equality and rights, the generation of the Strategic Gender Action Plan for the Environmentally Sound Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants, Mercury and Other Hazardous Substances was relevant.

UNDP also strengthened capacities and contributed directly to the treatment of polluting substances. It developed a training plan to promote compliance with regulations and conventions related to chemicals and their wastes and to strengthen the management capacities of national and local governments to improve inspection, disposal, monitoring and remediation processes involving persistent organic pollutants, mercury and other hazardous substances. UNDP reported the treatment of 9,883 metric tonnes of polychlorinated biphenyls, 37 metric tonnes of obsolete pesticides and 357 metric tonnes of mercury that would otherwise have ended up in landfills, waterways or the sea.

The implementation of the programme identified many persistent challenges in this area of action. Analytical capacities were found to be unequally distributed in different laboratories of the national system, which hindered the design and implementation of a chemical monitoring programme across the country. The lack of incentives for the private sector was also evident. Consequently, there is a window of opportunity for improving the involvement of the private sector. While the programme foresaw their participation and the formation of public-private partnerships, there were few economic, fiscal or social aspects motivating the sector to involve larger-scale farmers and livestock producers in waste management, circular economy and pollutants and chemicals initiatives. This weakened the sustainability of the results. Work with other actors, such as Indigenous communities, was addressed through the Strategy to promote Participatory Environmental Monitoring in the provinces of Salta and Jujuy and awareness-raising with regard to lithium extractive industries, but the capacity to sustain these initiatives over time or generate consensus among actors was limited.

## Case study #2: Municipal Waste: Economic Autonomy, Dignity and Environmental Sustainability.

**The acquisition of collection trucks played a catalytic role in accelerating the effectiveness of the circular economy and social inclusion policy in the province of Buenos Aires.**

The municipality of Lomas de Zamora in the province of Buenos Aires was a good example of the problems of waste management in urban and semi-urban environments in the country, which include a very low capacity for separation at source, informal waste collection and little financial capacity to pay for landfill remediation. The Ministry of Environment of the Province identified an opportunity to address these issues from a social inclusion perspective. Part of the strategy focused on the acquisition of a fleet of vehicles and the modernization of equipment and means to formalize the work of recycling cooperatives. After experimenting with different tenders that were unsuccessful due to lack of bidders, UNDP was approached.

UNDP supported the participation and competitiveness of bidders through the use of its own bidding and contract management processes that were able to reference US dollar prices. This was particularly important, given the high depreciation of the Argentinean peso. Through this, UNDP facilitated the purchase of 76 waste collection trucks for different municipalities in the province. Their use made it possible to speed up collection times and expand collection volumes.

During the visit for direct observation of the facilities of the South Recycling Node of Lomas de Zamora, the evaluation collected testimonies and data on the effects generated from these truck acquisitions. Together with the acquisition of machines for sorting waste and baling, the new operation made it possible to sell 500-kilogram bales of cardboard at \$120 per kilogram versus \$60 or \$70 for unsorted bags. The cooperative went from two members in 2022 to 30 members by the end of 2024. Quantitatively, they reported doubling their average income level despite a 70-percent drop in the value of cardboard due to the consumer crisis. They had access to a bank account for the first time and, among other subjective manifestations of personal fulfilment, they pointed to the ability to “finally be able to treat my teenage son” or “to be able to build my own house as a single mother of two children”.

The programme reached 1,500 of the 5,000 waste pickers formalized in cooperatives, 40 percent of whom were women, whose living conditions were surveyed to obtain a comprehensive diagnosis ranging from housing to health. In addition to increasing the source of income, self-esteem and the improvement of working conditions and meeting the environmental goal, the model made it easier to prevent more waste, such as oil, rubbers, textiles or fuels, from ending up in landfills that pollute the water and air and damage health, and allowed the traceability of waste from large generators through certificates issued by the recycling cooperatives.

**Finding 11. Sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity.** UNDP Argentina strengthened environmental institutions and promoted biodiversity conservation, green finance and sustainable livelihoods, especially among vulnerable communities. Nonetheless, the programme had limited reach among large-scale agricultural producers and significant structural challenges hindered the effectiveness of the federal native forest conservation strategy supported by UNDP. These included disparities in technical capacity between provinces and insufficient coordination both across provinces and with neighbouring countries to address shared environmental issues. Such gaps present future opportunities for UNDP to provide further support to the country.

UNDP provided technical advice strengthening the highest national environmental authority management capacities and at the provincial level for the implementation of the Law on Minimum Standards for the Environmental Protection of Native Forests and access to the established trust fund. The relevance of this line of work was highlighted by multiple actors interviewed as the main national mechanism for promoting forest conservation. Even though the trust fund was discontinued in 2024, the resources were channelled to the provinces through other mechanisms. The paradox of development was that the Northeast Argentina provinces, which faced the highest levels of deforestation, were the provinces with the least administrative capacity and resources to protect their native forests. Other UNDP actions included support for the consolidation of the National Programme for non-timber forest products and the development of the National Strategic Plan for the Sustainable Management of Palo Santo.

From a conservation standpoint, several initiatives were implemented; however, a comprehensive framework for action involving major stakeholders in the production sector was not established. The focus of the projects was on smallholder farmers to ensure livelihoods, while conserving biodiversity and working with livestock and crop farmers to advance climate-smart production were outside the scope of the programme. UNDP supported the promotion of regulatory reforms for the protection of wildlife species and supported the implementation of the national environmental land-use planning strategy in three provinces.

Although the scope was limited, the work with rural communities and Indigenous peoples generated positive localized results on sustainable livelihoods. The evaluation team was able to directly observe concrete examples such as the carob plant in Morillo (Salta), where 174 families and young people from Indigenous Wichi communities produced carob flour and had micro-enterprises for sale, providing an alternative source of income; the Chilito jam room in Valle Grande (Jujuy), which, after the end of the project, remained operational and generated income for 17 members (six men and 11 women); and the empowerment of women in alliance with the Gran Chaco Foundation, which allowed them to formalize cooperatives, access technology and strengthen their economic autonomy. These projects show installed capacity and continuity beyond their initial funding, demonstrating a causal relationship between conservation and local development.

UNDP supported the country in introducing new frameworks to boost green finance. The Partnership for Action on Green Economy programme promoted green and inclusive finance, facilitating access to funds and resources for sustainable projects. In addition, UNDP supported the development of a roadmap for a taxonomy of sustainable finance for the banking and insurance sectors and, within the framework of the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN), developed a national catalogue of financing mechanisms for biodiversity in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance and the Financial Needs Assessment Report in Chaco and Misiones. An insurance scheme was promoted for small livestock farmers to protect them from jaguar attacks, integrating conservation with economic resilience in an innovative way. UNDP assisted the country in obtaining internationally recognized certificates of compliance issued by the Nagoya Protocol. Argentina was a leader in successfully issuing more than 120 international certificates on the use of genetic resources.

## 2.5 Governance outcomes

**CPD direct effect 4:** By 2025, the country will have strengthened the promotion, protection and respect for the enjoyment of human rights based on gender equality and social and geographical equity principles for all and will have strengthened state institutions at the national and subnational levels so as to achieve efficiency and efficacy in public management and the promotion of policies for access to justice and citizen security. It will have also ensured access to public information, knowledge management and effective, inclusive participation.

### **UNDP CPD outputs:**

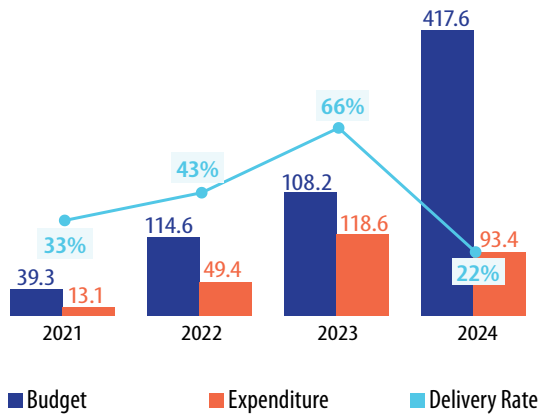
**OUTPUT 4.1:** Institutional innovation promoted at all levels of government based on transparency and accountability standards, including accessible digital interventions that reduce the digital divide, applying a differential and intersectional approach.

**OUTPUT 4.2:** Human rights-based approach and equal access to justice for all and for human security are strengthened with an intercultural and gender perspective.

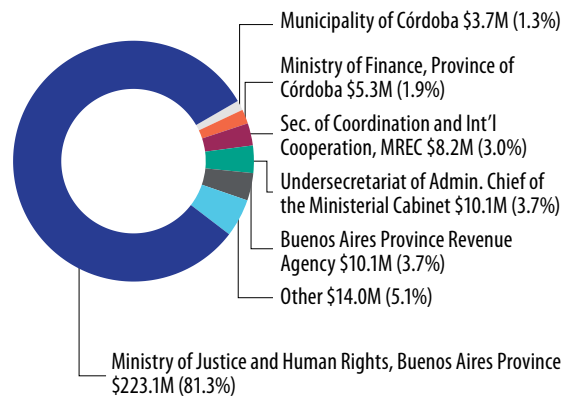
**OUTPUT 4.3:** Intersectoral partnerships at all levels of government strengthened to promote effective participation and access to information for inclusive decision-making, and gender equality mainstreaming fostered.

In this cycle, support for strengthening governance was the largest area of UNDP's country programme in terms of number of projects and the second-largest in terms of budget and expenditure. It had a total budget of \$751.7 million (see Figure 18) spread over three programme outputs and 42 projects. Expenditure amounted to \$274.5 million, representing an implementation rate of 37 percent, the lowest of the four programme areas. This is largely explained by the large imbalance of the project 'Support to the Penitentiary Service of the Province of Buenos Aires', which accounts for 82 percent of spending in the area. Other important implementing partners were the Revenue Agency of the Province of Buenos Aires, the Undersecretariat of Justice Administration and the Ministry of Finance of the Province of Cordoba (see Figure 19). In parallel to initiatives at the federal level, the main provincial governments worked with were those of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Chaco, Salta and Jujuy.

**FIGURE 18. Outcome 4: Budget and expenditure by year (in millions US\$)**



**FIGURE 19. Outcome 4: Expenditure per implementing partner**



Source: UNDP IEO. Data as of February 2025

**Finding 12. Institutional modernization.** UNDP’s support to digitalization of public services, upgrading technological equipment and improving institutional management and financial administration systems improved the efficiency and effectiveness of multiple Argentinean institutions to deliver on their mandates. This technical support was highly appreciated by national counterparts and has led to an increased interest in expanding UNDP’s role and opportunity to provide strategic advice, beyond digital transformation of public services.

This area of intervention particularly evidenced UNDP’s focus on supporting and strengthening the technological infrastructure and tools of national and subnational governments and institutions to implement their public policies. The proposed change pathways were relevant and connected to the catalysts defined by UNDP in its Global Strategic Plan to optimize development impact through digitization<sup>45</sup> and strategic innovation.<sup>46</sup> In doing so, UNDP contributed to the modernization, simplification and digitization of the management systems and processes of a heterogeneous set of institutions.

In support such as that given to the Bank of the Argentine Nation, UNDP demonstrated its capacity to support modernization processes and the implementation of digital solutions. With 11 million customers and 17,000 employees, the Bank of the Argentine Nation at the time of this evaluation was the most important bank in the country in terms of territorial scope in the promotion of development. With them and through the provision of specialized international consultants for the implementation of the modernization strategy, UNDP demonstrated agility, transparency and professionalism at a low cost. Throughout the entire support, which began in 2020, UNDP gained the confidence of three different bank management teams and, despite some delay and low implementation volumes, the institution offered its more than 22 million users an up-to-date digital financial management and business services system. At the time of the evaluation, upgrades to anti-fraud and anti-money laundering systems were underway. With respect to this intervention and complementing the recommendations made by the mid-term evaluation of the project, a window of opportunity was identified for the financial inclusion of vulnerable sectors and the facilitation of Second Party Opinion for the development of sustainable bonds.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Support countries in building inclusive, ethical and sustainable digital societies.

<sup>46</sup> Enable governments and communities to improve the performance of systems as a whole so that they are adaptive and resilient.

<sup>47</sup> For reference, the UNDP in Mexico issues an annual non-binding opinion on the location of public bonds and their impact in terms of development. <https://www.undp.org/es/mexico/publicaciones/opinion-no-vinculante-del-pnud-al-reporte-de-asignacion-e-impacto-del-bono-ods-2024>.

In general terms, applying largely to the large number of institutions supported by UNDP in this type of modernization process, the evaluation team identified a demand from partners for UNDP to take a more active role in offering its strategic and innovative services. There was interest in knowing how to better leverage UNDP's global network, how to promote more South-South cooperation and inter-provincial exchanges and how to encourage greater innovation beyond digital transformation. In this line, the application of artificial intelligence in the work strategies of this portfolio was still very incipient and the interaction of the Accelerator Lab with this type of projects and partners was very limited. UNDP may have missed opportunities for intervention along these lines.

### Case study #3: Modernization of the Penitentiary Service of the Province of Buenos Aires: Food provision as an engine for the transformation of the system.

**The transformation of the food model of the Penitentiary Units of the province, thanks to the modifications introduced in the bidding processes by the UNDP, improved the prison infrastructure and the employability of prisoners and was identified as a factor with a high potential to favour the reintegration of persons deprived of liberty.**

Among the main problems diagnosed in Buenos Aires's prisons was the shortage and low nutritional value of food, with the consequent added costs for families providing supplementary food. Likewise, the difficulty of reintegrating prisoners once they have served their sentence is a major challenge for the entire Argentinean penitentiary system. With the motivation to address these problems comprehensively and after the experience of failed bidding processes, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights of the Province of Buenos Aires turned to UNDP to take advantage of the window of opportunity of procedural modernization with an emphasis on the social and economic insertion of inmates. UNDP provided technical advice in the content and elaboration of the tender documents and processes for the provision of food in viands (instead of the traditional bulk provision) for inmates and their staff. Also, it monitored and directly supervised the delivery of the goods and services established in the tender after its award.

The main changes generated as a direct result were the increase in the number of bidders and the transparency and agility of the process. In addition, the procedure included continuous training both in food handling and food preparation for persons deprived of liberty, tools that favour these persons' social insertion once they have served their prison sentence. The effects of this, according to project reports, have led to access to quality food in 70 percent of the penitentiary centres, reaching 33,000 inmates, or 45 percent of the total in the province.

Through interviews and direct observation during field visits to the Florencio Varela Complex, clear elements pointing to quality food provision were recorded. Among the positive effects reported were the uninterrupted service, nutritional improvement and the pacification of the environment. However, there is also evidence, such as the mid-term evaluation of the programme, which pointed to the need to improve the results-based management of the model, or the Special Report of the Provincial Commission for Memory that collected data in 2023 and pointed to the persistent need to guarantee the right to food and more robust control and oversight schemes.

In a context of human rights violations in Latin American prisons that has been highlighted by international organizations in the field, this model offers an opportunity for a paradigm shift applicable to other prison systems in the region and UNDP could accompany the export of the model.

**Finding 13. Justice and security.** UNDP was a trusted partner of multiple entities of the justice system, enabling progress in areas such as innovation in criminal investigation, process standardization and capacity-building. It also contributed to broadening access to justice for sectors of the population that had been traditionally excluded. While the initiatives were highly relevant and UNDP's work was widely recognized, the pace and scope of the expected results were influenced by shifts in government priorities, the early stage of some initiatives and the need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems.

Given the challenges facing public perceptions of justice in the country,<sup>48</sup> UNDP support to expand and improve access to justice, particularly for traditionally excluded populations such as Indigenous communities, remained crucial. This included assisting in the creation of a network of free legal services to victims of violence, promoting legal counselling through community legal advocates and expanding services for victims in the northern Andean corridor. These efforts were also supported by the Spotlight Initiative, which strengthened legal services for victims of gender-based violence and improved access for Indigenous women and women with disabilities. However, UNDP indicators point to a continuing unfavourable trend, with a decrease in the number of people accessing justice compared to the baseline data.<sup>49</sup> The data call into question the effectiveness of long-standing support for the expansion of Access to Justice Centres created to reach Indigenous communities, whose legal needs have historically been neglected. In addition, changing government priorities also undermined both the sustainability of the initiative, with 81 of these Centres closing by 2024, and the reorientation of the request for UNDP support to accompany and complete the 2014 reform of the Criminal Procedure Code, which lagged behind in the federal justice system.

In this cycle, UNDP contributed to the strengthening of criminal justice in Argentina through the promotion of jurimetrics as an analytical tool to achieve greater effectiveness in the investigation of acts of corruption and organized crime in its various manifestations. This initiative was highly innovative and relevant from the point of view of criminal justice, as it allowed the country to improve its capacity to implement the UN Convention Against Corruption, to which it is a party.<sup>50</sup> UNDP trained the Airport Security Police, the Argentinean Naval Prefecture and the Office of the Prosecutor for Administrative Investigations of the Province of Río Negro in the use of legal techniques. In addition, it generated spaces for collaboration and analysis with the Federal Justice and the Prosecutor's Office of Trafficking and Exploitation of Persons of the Public Prosecutor's Office and, in an initial stage, with the National Ministry of Justice. All this made possible the standardization of internal processes, organizational improvements, the expansion of international collaboration and coordination between powers. Among the effects was the recovery of assets for social purposes. The degree of trust in UNDP was very high, given the type of complex crimes analysed with these techniques. The innovative nature and the generation of results made this line of work very positively valued by justice institutions.

Equally relevant, and with high external coherence, was UNDP's focus on improving access to justice for persons with disabilities. With funding from the United Nations Partnership for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,<sup>51</sup> UNDP sought to strengthen the capacities of institutions and organizations of persons with disabilities to promote legal reforms in accordance with the applicable Convention, create accessible open data platforms on disability, develop tools to expand access to justice, with an emphasis on women and

<sup>48</sup> Luis D'Angelo, et al. 2019, National study on perceptions of and access to justice. ACBA.

<sup>49</sup> Baseline: 248,164 persons; 2023 data: 202,868 persons. Source: UNDP. CPD 2021-2025 ARG Indicator matrix.

<sup>50</sup> The use of jurimetric techniques in high-impact cases consists of analysing the implementation of the standards of the United Nations Conventions against Transnational Organised Crime (and their optional protocols) and the United Nations Convention against Corruption – to which Argentina is a party – by analysing the level of adoption of these standards by national legislation and their application in real judicial cases under the condition of confidentiality.

<sup>51</sup> In articulation with WHO/PAHO, UNFPA, OHCHR and UNICEF.

girls with disabilities and Indigenous persons with disabilities, and facilitate the linking of organizations to government coordination mechanisms. However, the project's progress at the time of this evaluation was still in its initial diagnostic stage.

UNDP contributed to reducing the weaknesses of the monitoring and statistical information system of the justice system, but there are still ample opportunities for improvement. UNDP, in collaboration with the Observatory of the Argentine Social Debt of the Catholic University, has carried out the first global measurement of the indicator of access to civil justice in the framework of the annual Social Debt Survey. By collecting relevant and comparable data, UNDP generated evidence to show the link between poverty and access to justice, with results of high interest (for example, regarding the relationship between socio-occupational strata and access to dispute resolution mechanisms).<sup>52</sup> The continuity of the exercise to obtain comparability in the analyses, the exploitation of the data and greater dissemination of its results were identified as opportunities to achieve a greater impact of this survey on public policies.

**Finding 14. Taxation and anti-corruption.** Through support for institutional modernization and the capacity to foster public-private partnerships, UNDP strengthened tax collection capacity and the control of tax evasion in the province of Buenos Aires and promoted corporate integrity and transparency as a means of preventing corruption.

While issues such as taxation, the fight against tax evasion or support to the state in its anti-corruption efforts were not directly explicit programmatic elements in the CPD, different UNDP-supported initiatives that contributed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of public institutions had an impact on these areas of development. The project to support the modernization of the Revenue Agency of the Province of Buenos Aires (ARBA) and the different achievements in terms of institutional strengthening stood out.

UNDP enabled the strengthening of management and the modernization of tools for better tax collection and inspection in the province of Buenos Aires. UNDP has supported ARBA since its inception in 2008, facilitating improvements in technologies and digital infrastructure for the management and administration of tax information during this cycle. UNDP contributed by managing international procurement processes, providing access to a wide range of suppliers, minimizing exposure to exchange rate fluctuations and reducing processing times. This enabled international technological acquisitions, including those for the renewal and updating of the mainframe.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, technical assistance, such as UNDP's assistance in correcting objects and improving the cadastre's cartographic records, allowed the institution to improve the tax base on urban and rural plots and to determine the green index in the province, in order to monitor compliance with tax obligations and detect evasion manoeuvres. The counterpart's impression was that there had been a substantial improvement in tax collection and control, although it was unable to provide precise quantitative data. Among the challenges identified were the fragmentation and dispersion of the Agency's data and the need for further investment in tax intelligence.

At federal level, UNDP promoted integrity and transparency with mixed results. Together with the Global Compact and the International Development Bank, UNDP promoted integrity by providing technical assistance for the creation of the Integrity and Transparency Register for Enterprises and Entities, known locally as RITE, in 2022. This public and voluntary register allowed companies and other actors to register their integrity programmes, detailing the policies and procedures implemented to prevent and combat

<sup>52</sup> While eight out of 10 respondents from the professional middle socio-occupational stratum were able to access dispute resolution mechanisms, only six out of 10 were able to access dispute resolution mechanisms among those from the lower classes: traditional middle, integrated working and working poor. <https://www.undp.org/es/argentina/comunicados-de-prensa/justicia-y-desarrollo-sostenible>

<sup>53</sup> Server for high-speed data storage and processing located in the Data Processing Centre.

corruption. The cost-free, voluntary initiative served a dual function: registration of entities and public disclosure of their transparency programmes. At a local level, UNDP supported the National Anti-Corruption Office in ensuring compliance with the mandates of international conventions. The initiative required joint work with provincial governments, the private sector and civil society organizations and enabled the creation of guidelines, the training of cadres and the organization of networks and units within public institutions to promote integrity and transparency. The sustainability of the initiative, however, remained in doubt due to changing government priorities. Challenges in achieving changes in the level of indicators measuring corruption or the perception of corruption remained, which was identified as a direct cause of low foreign investment confidence in the country.

**Finding 15. Citizen participation.** While UNDP maintained wide recognition for its historical track record in supporting governance and dialogue spaces in the country, the results in these areas in this cycle were limited and the mechanisms for their sustainability were weak. A lack of explicit strategy and cross-sectoral partnerships focused on participation and dialogue for decision-making limited progress in participatory governance, accountability and citizen participation of excluded sectors.

UNDP continued to capitalize on a longstanding history of support to governance and national dialogues. It was recurrent among different actors interviewed to associate UNDP with the process of consolidating democracy and the construction of dialogues in times of crisis in Argentina, such as those that occurred in 2001.<sup>54</sup> However, in this programme cycle, there was no UNDP strategy to activate institutional interest and generate spaces for the promotion of citizen participation.

In this evaluation period, UNDP set out to promote access to information for inclusive decision-making, but initiatives were small and lacked sustainability. UNDP identified national and subnational access to information platforms and tools, as well as active transparency and accountability initiatives, as avenues for change. The main initiative in this line of open government was with the government of the Province of Chaco. Thanks to SIGOB,<sup>55</sup> UNDP strengthened three provincial public management systems<sup>56</sup> and achieved, according to UNDP data, the management of 60,000 citizen demands. However, the new provincial authorities discontinued the use of the systems, citing budget limitations.

During this cycle, participatory governance was limited to certain thematic initiatives. There was little evidence of the incorporation of mechanisms to encourage citizen participation and dialogue in decision-making processes. In the area of sustainable development, UNDP organized national Stockholm +50 dialogues with national and local authorities and representatives of different sectors. Through the promotion of political parity in CABA, an advocacy and positioning exercise was identified for the generation of regular information and dialogue to achieve progress in terms of women's political rights. Building on internal engagement mechanisms, UNDP deepened its collaboration within the ATENEA Regional Programme,<sup>57</sup> producing the report 'Breaking glass ceilings, consolidating parity as a democratic principle in Argentina: progress and pending challenges',<sup>58</sup> which assessed the state of parity and the effective exercise of women's political rights at the national level across eight dimensions. The results revealed persistent deficits in the areas of political parties, the judiciary and the electoral system.

<sup>54</sup> On that occasion, the national state, together with UNDP and the Catholic Church, convened a national dialogue.

<sup>55</sup> See: <https://www.undp.org/latin-america/sigob>

<sup>56</sup> Priority management (PRIORITIES Goal System), communication action (ACOM System) and the Task Force Management System (CUMPLE).

<sup>57</sup> The ATENEA Programme, jointly promoted by the UNDP Gender Area – Regional Headquarters, UN Women and International IDEA, established the need for better information systems in order to promote strategies to address the barriers that still prevent women from participating in politics on equal terms with men.

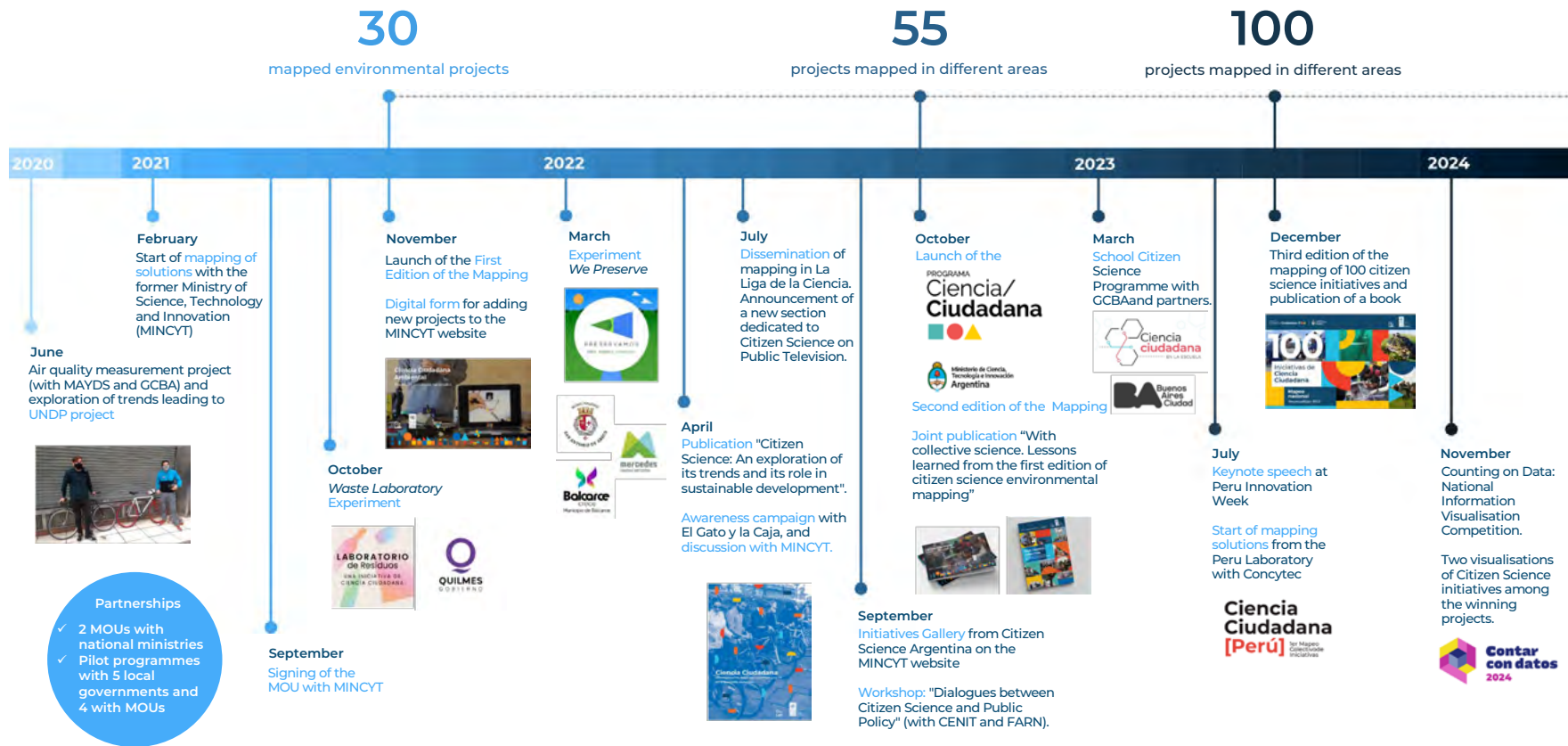
<sup>58</sup> ATENEA (2021), *Breaking glass ceilings, consolidating parity as a democratic principle in Argentina: advances and challenges ahead*. PNUD, ONUMUJERES, IDEA INTERNACIONAL.

FIGURE 20. Citizen Science – Acceleration Lab UNDP Argentina

## Citizen Science: From post-pandemic experiment to national public policy

The Accelerator Lab demonstrated the potential in exploration, mapping and experimentation to scale up initiatives and achieve impact at the national level. From a small citizen experiment measuring air quality in the aftermath of the pandemic, the Lab drove a process that, three years later was formalized as a national programme of the Ministry, influenced the national science ecosystem and was exported to Peru.

## Citizen Science – Acceleration Lab UNDP Argentina

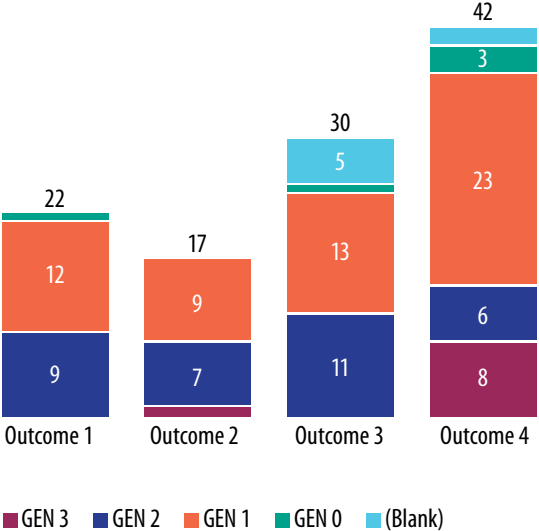


## 2.6 Cross-cutting issues

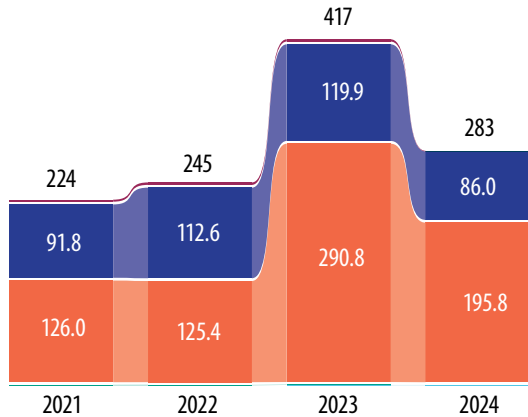
**Finding 16. Gender equality.** Many national counterparts highlighted how their projects benefited from UNDP’s advocacy in strengthening gender equality components from the design level. However, the aggregate data pointed to a weakness in the capacity to increase the scope of this line of work, with reduced investment and a predominance of siloed interventions, resulting in limited results and difficulty to achieve changes at policy level.

The analysis by gender equality markers of the projects reflected few differences between the programme areas; in all four, the predominance was to have a majority of projects with limited contributions (GEN1) (see Figure 21). The evolution over time pointed to a drop in the percentage weight of projects with significant gender equality objectives (GEN2) (see Figure 22). These indicators pointed to a reduced *Motivation* component in the different authorities to promote projects, with a greater focus on addressing the causes and consequences of inequality between women and men. While the indicator could be read as a reflection of UNDP’s low advocacy capacity, interviews with national counterparts highlighted UNDP’s work at the project design stage to take into consideration and address issues with a gender perspective. That enabled a significant number of NIM projects to be GEN2 and have relevant contributions as reflected in multiple findings of this report. Only one NIM project had gender equality as its main objective (GEN3), the prevention of teenage pregnancy, which our Gender Results Effectiveness Scale analysis also considered to have high transformative potential due to the results (see Finding 7).

**FIGURE 21.** Distribution of projects by gender marker and programme impact



**FIGURE 22.** Evolution of expenditure distribution by gender marker (in millions US\$)



Source: UNDP IEO. Data as of June 2025

Programmatically, efforts to address violence against women and girls were relevant, although very limited in scope. With funding from the UNDP Seoul Policy Centre, Córdoba Province (and later Salta Province as part of the project's scaling-up process) implemented the monitoring and evaluation tool adapted from the Korean 'Sunflower Centres', thereby improving the one-stop-shop model for women survivors of violence in the province of Córdoba, known as *Polo Integral de la Mujer*. Also, in the context of the UN's joint Initiative Spotlight,<sup>59</sup> UNDP implemented for the first time at the country level a survey on the prevalence of violence against women in 12 provinces, contributing to the expansion of the information available and making it possible for the country to have a baseline.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, it improved comprehensive care services for women victims in the provinces of Salta, Jujuy and Buenos Aires, which were prioritized due to their high rates and absolute numbers of femicides. Considering that the primary concern for women involved institutional violence, UNDP facilitated dialogue between civil society and institutions. Although it was not possible to formalize a public policy as planned due to a lack of time and changes in local authorities, it did enable exchanges and training that changed the approach perspective in various institutions.

UNDP promoted initiatives for women's economic empowerment and the care economy, but their scope and sustainability were limited. Advocacy efforts were made through communication campaigns and workshops for men to promote a co-responsible distribution of care;<sup>61</sup> research was carried out on the strategies of women in the popular sectors of the Conurbano Bonaerense to cope with the negative impacts of the crisis by COVID, especially in terms of financial inclusion for recovery and economic autonomy;<sup>62</sup> and 31 local productive initiatives led by women or where women are the majority participants were supported.<sup>63</sup> In total, UNDP reported reaching 1,630 women through 75 workshops and trainings. Although these actions were good contributions during the COVID recovery through an interagency initiative (UNPRPD MPTF), it was difficult, two years after most of this work, to determine whether it had generated significant effects in public policy as it was planned in the first result of the project.

**Finding 17. Leave no one behind.** The strong social component and the scope of public policies supported by the UNDP projects facilitated the identification of multiple results for the benefit of population groups at risk of being left behind. Groups of street people, persons deprived of liberty, Indigenous people or persons with disabilities were within the scope of the programme, even as the environment for advancing inclusion became increasingly challenging.

Some initiatives were timely in identifying aspects of intersectionality and enhancing outcomes for those with multiple vulnerabilities. For instance, community-based organizations participating in the UNDP-supported National Food Security Plan (NFSP) played a vital role in assisting and supporting children from drug- and alcohol-affected backgrounds, as well as parents deprived of liberty, by offering recreational and educational activities. However, the measurement of these unplanned effects was not systematically integrated into the decentralized evaluation conducted under the NFSP evaluation plan, indicating an opportunity to adopt more rigorous methods to assess the overall impact of the NFSP. Efforts to promote access to justice were particularly relevant in the cases of Indigenous and local communities in the northeast and northwest regions of the country, who reported more than 4,000 consultations in the itinerant service.

<sup>59</sup> In partnership with UNFPA, ILO, UN WOMEN, UNICEF and UNODC.

<sup>60</sup> The database was made available for an ongoing national study of the economic costs of violence by UN Women and the International Development Bank.

<sup>61</sup> In partnership with ILO, ECLAC and UNWOMEN and with the collaboration of the UNDP Accelerator Lab and the Civil Association La Poderosa.

<sup>62</sup> Contemos los cuidados. Una experiencia social para visibilizar los cuidados (youtube.com) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TSBS7Pevfg&t=6s>.  
<https://www.undp.org/es/argentina/blog/mujeres-en-red-ni-autosuficientes-ni-dependientes>. <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/noticias/prieto-expuso-en-la-presentacion-de-un-informe-del-pnud-sobre-inclusion-financiera-y>. <https://www.undp.org/es/argentina/publicaciones/mujeres-en-red-soluciones-financieras-y-de-recuperacion-socioeconomica>.

<sup>63</sup> In the provinces of Buenos Aires, Mendoza, Corrientes, Rio Negro, Jujuy, Santa Fe, Entre Ríos and Catamarca, as well as in the ACBA.

Initiatives in urban environments reached people living on the streets. In the CABA, the programme for housing inclusion, training and employment for homeless people reported reaching 900 homeless people with the Housing First methodology, which prioritized the provision of housing and complemented it with training, insertion and labour intermediation actions. It also contributed to the design of the training offered by the Centre for Autonomy and Development. The sustainability of the initiative was strengthened by laying the foundations for a new municipal programme of inclusion networks. A lesson learned was the importance of being sensitive to those adults without completed literacy and the need to adapt courses and training offerings to their needs and interests in order to favour their opportunities for labour market insertion. A strong link with the most disadvantaged in urban areas was also identified in the work done with those deprived of liberty (see Case study #3).

From a health and human rights approach, UNDP enabled access to funds and the implementation of initiatives connected to different international frameworks and agreements. In the fight against AIDS, UNDP, with Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework funds, promoted access to rights for the transgender population and other vulnerable communities in 46 Argentinean municipalities that have signed the Paris Declaration to end the AIDS epidemic;<sup>64</sup> empowered civil society through comprehensive sexuality education campaigns; and supported the Global Alliance against HIV Stigma and Discrimination. UNDP also facilitated access to funds from the United Nations Partnership for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD MPTF) (see Finding 13). Despite mobilizing external funds, the political and social context presented challenges to implementing agendas related to access to human rights.

**Finding 18. Monitoring and evaluation.** UNDP established an effective monitoring and supervision system for the management of its projects in line with the needs generated by the NIM. The counterpart of this model was a very weak evaluation system that failed to systematically quantify and assess UNDP's contributions and outcomes.

The NIM, with the particularities described in this report, was a determining factor in shaping the monitoring and evaluation system under which the UNDP office operates. The Modality's emphasis on project management and provision of goods and services to national institutions focused on ensuring and controlling compliance with standards and protocols. This generated a set of indicators that turned out to be mostly process indicators rather than outcome indicators.

UNDP's country programme inevitably reflected weaknesses in the evaluation culture at the level of national public institutions. A weak interpretation of results-based management permeated the projects and their managers, with reporting focused on accountability and the realization of activities and delivery of outputs and little reflection on outcomes. Oversight mechanisms were more focused on audit and expenditure control aspects. UNDP was not able to establish a more ambitious system to support the generation of evidence on the effects of its interventions, including efficiency (see Finding 2) and impact (see Findings 6 and 9). The evaluation function could be improved by taking advantage of the opportunities opened by the nature of some interventions to measure public policy impact.

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<sup>64</sup> [https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2014/20141201\\_Paris\\_declaration](https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2014/20141201_Paris_declaration)

# CHAPTER 3

# CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



## 3.1 Conclusions

**Conclusion 1. UNDP Argentina expanded its collaboration in the country, facilitating the implementation of public policies and thus enabling the effects of its interventions to have a significant impact.** The programme's reliance on government funds and its implementation modality had various trade-offs but it responded in a timely manner to the particular needs of the different institutions and generated a shared recognition of its usefulness in the face of COVID-19 and some of the country's recent development challenges.

UNDP's collaboration approach, in line with the development of an upper-middle-income country with very high human development, was mostly based on the NIM of projects with the government's own funds. UNDP was largely recognized for its effective service delivery, encompassing its project management, oversight and monitoring ability and its operational capacity to generate efficiencies. The contributions of UNDP unlocked the implementation of institutional changes and facilitated the advancement of several public policy initiatives with significant impact across various sectors. These efforts supported citizens in exercising their rights to health, particularly in response to COVID-19, food security and access to justice, while also enhancing institutional effectiveness through modernization processes at key organizational levels. There was a shared recognition among the partners of the contributions in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, promotion of transparency, good use of public resources and the fight against corruption.

There were several trade-offs in the NIM of the programme using government funds. On the one hand, UNDP had little autonomy to address different development issues, and dependence on political will and the availability of national funds to generate new projects undermined internal coherence. This made it difficult to upscale and replicate good practices among provinces, despite UNDP's active efforts to expand its programme in the north of the country. The project-focused relationship with counterparts makes it difficult for them to understand and have a holistic view of UNDP's partnership potential. The role of advocacy and technical advice was limited, in most cases only during the project design stage. Similarly, the national implementation logic influenced the evaluation culture, creating low incentives and weak capacity to promote public policy evaluations.

**Conclusion 2. UNDP's contributions to socio-economic development in Argentina were substantial and were framed in a dual perspective of boosting productive development and strengthening social policies.** UNDP maintained strategic partnerships that enabled it to promote innovative solutions to support SMEs at the provincial level as well as social and health policies such as food security or the reduction of unintentional teenage pregnancy at the national level. UNDP demonstrated an adaptive capacity to ensure policy continuity between government administrations and this enabled it to identify new opportunities for the future.

Key economic development inputs, such as the promotion of value chains and the triple-impact orientation, were relevant and innovative and their results were highly valued by the beneficiaries. However, they were geographically very specific and UNDP had little capacity to replicate these successful strategies in other provinces. The initiatives to promote the economic empowerment of young people through vocational training and labour insertion had more evident repercussions at the level of institutional strengthening than in terms of impact on the target population. The capacity to generate remarkable synergies between interventions in both areas was weak.

The social policies supported had a broad scope thanks to their connection with national plans promoted by the ministries at the federal level. Efficiency in the management and transfer of funds and the capacity to recruit technical staff and acquire goods and inputs made it possible to guarantee the timeliness of the implementation of public policies such as the NFSP, the initiatives to respond to COVID-19 or the National Plan for the Prevention and Reduction of Unintentional Pregnancy in Adolescence. The institutional changes with the new government forced UNDP to carry out an exercise of accountability and adaptive management, which to date has been well received and has made it possible to identify opportunities for more comprehensive approaches, such as that derived from the new configuration of the Ministry of Human Capital.

**Conclusion 3. UNDP promoted highly relevant environmental issues in an unfavourable context, in which its capacity to mobilize international vertical financing made it possible to support the country in multiple areas of intervention, such as climate action, chemical waste management, soil recovery or biodiversity conservation, among others.** The thematic portfolio illustrated the programme's challenges in addressing the disparity in provincial capacities, the challenge of expanding and strengthening links with the productive and financial private sector, and the need to strengthen evaluation systems.

A limiting factor for environmental progress in this cycle was the limited financial capacity at the national and subnational levels to fund environmental programmes, coupled with the reduction of political interest, reflected in the elimination of the Ministry of Environment at the federal level and the suspension of the trust fund for the implementation of the Law on Minimum Environmental Protection of Native Forests. This context underlined the relevance of UNDP in attracting international funding and in supporting the country in its national strategies and plans and in meeting its international commitments. However, the other complementary factor proposed in the programme's design as key to this area, the creation of public-private partnerships with the productive sector, has not materialized yet.

UNDP environmental efforts supported the country in achieving tangible results in significant areas such as keeping the international climate agenda ongoing, working with Indigenous communities and extractive industries within the Escazu agreement, reducing chemicals and pollutants and creating initiatives linking the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. They had very relevant side effects, such as the promotion of tourism, job creation, increased income and increased self-esteem and empowerment, but mostly at the micro scale. From an innovation standpoint, the area was noted for initiatives like BIOFIN and livestock insurance against jaguar attacks, which combined conservation with economic resilience. Institutional and capacity-building at the subnational level, the promotion of green finance and the establishment of more robust evaluation frameworks were identified as opportunities.

**Conclusion 4. In governance, UNDP balanced support for existing partners in institutional strengthening—mainly through digitalizing public services—with new justice sector initiatives like juridical techniques. It prioritized human rights and territorial equity and improved access to justice for vulnerable groups and victims of gender-based violence.** The area identified weaknesses in the programme model, including fragmented interventions, a need for greater UNDP involvement as a strategic advisor and challenges integrating topics like citizen participation that attract limited institutional interest.

Institutional strengthening and modernization aligned closely with the country programme added value, as shown by the high number of related projects and demonstrated capacity to support digital transformation in institutions like Banco de la Nación Argentina and ARBA. The integration of innovation, such as using

jurimetric techniques in criminal justice, was particularly valuable. The focus on groups at risk of exclusion—like women affected by violence, incarcerated individuals and native and local communities in remote areas—highlighted the need to improve their access to justice.

At the same time, this area highlighted the programme’s difficulties in overcoming siloed approaches that hinder the articulation of comprehensive public policies. While the context of political change had a more significant effect on areas such as access to justice, other programme areas, such as the fight against corruption, promotion of citizen participation and dialogue in decision-making, maintained very low interest between administrations, significantly reducing UNDP’s opportunities to influence the promotion of more-inclusive governance.

**Conclusion 5. UNDP played an active role, positively acknowledged by national counterparts, in ensuring that the different projects paid attention to the issues and causes that affect the full guarantee of the rights of women and vulnerable groups of the population.** The variety of social policies supported by the Programme facilitated the visibility of the Leave No One Behind results, but, in both cases, the panorama of pending challenges identified remained very broad.

The aggregate data for the programme as a whole did not reflect a significant change in the trajectory with which UNDP has been working in the defence of women’s rights and their economic empowerment. Furthermore, the programme’s implementation was affected by the paradigm shift in the approach to gender equality and its removal from the agenda of interest of the federal authorities. However, a proactive role was evidenced in which UNDP promoted reflection and identified ways to better develop the rights of women and other vulnerable groups. Care policies and labour insertion initiatives with young people were promoted, which highlighted the ample opportunity to promote the economic empowerment of women, young people and Indigenous people.

## 3.2 Recommendations

**Recommendation 1. UNDP should strengthen its partnerships and external communication strategy to enhance partners’ understanding of the whole range of development opportunities that UNDP can provide, highlight its strategic role, access alternative funding sources, reinforce its programmatic cohesiveness and prevent risks.**

In the next cycle, UNDP should be proactive in mitigating the unintended effects of its collaboration model in Argentina. Given the current size of the programme and its external exposure to the national political context, it should be proactive in preventing risks. Given its proven capacity to generate results in the support of public policies, UNDP Argentina should better explain to stakeholders the large variety of development solutions that UNDP supports. UNDP in Argentina should consider securing additional funding to support the development of new knowledge products, such as updating the national human development report from 2017. Additionally, exploring and pursuing alternative funding sources, including partnerships with private foundations and the finance sector, would be beneficial. For this purpose, it is recommended to develop an agenda for sharing experiences with other UNDP offices in upper-middle-income countries on diversifying large government cost-sharing portfolios. For instance, UNDP in Mexico could be a good starting point, given its recent success in accessing non-traditional funding sources. All of this would strengthen UNDP’s programmatic cohesiveness in Argentina and put UNDP in a better position to support the country in solving structural problems affecting its development. In that sense, a cross-cutting action that could guide programming in the next cycle would be to accompany the country in its process of accession to the OECD.

**Recommendation 2. UNDP should strengthen the internal coherence of its programme, taking advantage of identified opportunities to support the country in the delivery of basic services and socio-economic development. It should take advantage of the holistic approach to development that the new ministerial human capital structure can bring to enhance the desired human development and poverty reduction outcomes.** It should promote interprovincial development solutions and facilitate sharing successful practices in institutional modernization, health and economic growth.

UNDP should continue to strengthen the internal coherence and synergies of its programme in order to move beyond results limited to individual projects and to expand the impact of portfolios. UNDP should leverage aspects of the current political context to support broader interventions aligned with its focus on human development and multidimensional poverty reduction, such as collaborating with the unified ministry overseeing Children, Adolescents and Family; Education; Labour, Employment and Social Security. In addition, it should further leverage the knowledge and best practices gained in supporting the health sector to replicate these efforts, including UNDP's support for improving logistics and the distribution of medical supplies. UNDP should leverage the government's new openness to private sector collaboration for economic development to enhance its growth, productivity and competitiveness programmes, focusing on women's economic empowerment and the green economy.

**Recommendation 3. UNDP Country Office should focus its efforts in strengthening private sector support in environmentally sustainable solutions, promoting circular economy, green city models and sustainable finance.** Also, it should seek to play a more prominent role in providing solutions to common problems between provinces, as well as those of a transboundary nature.

UNDP may increase its engagement with the private sector by outlining the potential benefits of climate-smart adaptation policies and investments in efficient agriculture and livestock, focusing on effects on employment, economic development and climate resilience. In addition, and building on its local and global experience, UNDP should promote wider initiatives in terms of circular economy, electromobility and green city models. It should promote the potential of green finance to generate conservation and biodiversity impacts, as demonstrated in this programme cycle. UNDP should take a more active role in addressing interprovincial issues like forest management and transboundary challenges, considering environmental, economic and security impacts, while improving UNDP multi-country and inter-office cooperation.

**Recommendation 4. UNDP should intensify support for justice sector reform, efforts to combat violence and initiatives promoting transparency and fighting corruption.** Additionally, it should assist with state administrative reforms, digitalizing public services and strengthening the civil service.

Regarding governance and institutional modernization, UNDP should continue to use the entry point of digitalization of services, with greater emphasis on the perspective of citizen participation, transparency and governance. There is a window of opportunity to decide how artificial intelligence is to be incorporated and used in institutional frameworks, as the latest UNDP Human Development Report has just pointed out at the global level. UNDP should take advantage of the window of opportunity to boost the fight against corruption and tax fraud through technological innovation. In addition, UNDP should support the country in restoring the legitimacy of its institutions, both in the executive branch (e.g., by reforming the civil service and its administrative processes) and in the judiciary (e.g., by improving access, strengthening victim protection mechanisms and reaching out to citizens).

**Recommendation 5. UNDP should strengthen its capacity to measure the added value it brings in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in project management while strengthening its programme and project results frameworks and evaluation systems to better capture the impact of its interventions.**

Given the common weaknesses identified in all programme areas in this area, UNDP should invest in strengthening internal capacities, both operationally and programmatically, to enable the programme as a whole to record the elements with which it contributes value to the country. UNDP should promote strategic alliances with academia, along the lines of the one developed with the Observatory of the Argentine Social Debt of the Catholic University, to strengthen the evaluation frameworks of the different social policies that UNDP supports and to ensure that these aspects are ideally reflected in project documents and with allocated budget allocations. UNDP should institutionalize the good practice of systematically generating annual reports for external dissemination, paying special attention to and differentiating between two levels: 1) results in terms of institutional changes and improvements and 2) effects on people's quality of life as a result of these changes.

### 3.3 Key recommendations and management response

#### RECOMMENDATION 1.



**UNDP should strengthen its partnerships and external communication strategy to enhance partners' understanding of the whole range of development opportunities that UNDP can provide, highlight its strategic role, access alternative funding sources, reinforce its programmatic cohesiveness and prevent risks.**

In the next cycle, UNDP should be proactive in mitigating the unintended effects of its collaboration model in Argentina. Given the current size of the programme and its external exposure to the national political context, it should be proactive in preventing risks. Given its proven capacity to generate results in the support of public policies, UNDP Argentina should better explain to stakeholders the large variety of development solutions that UNDP supports. UNDP in Argentina should consider securing additional funding to support the development of new knowledge products, such as updating the national human development report from 2017. Additionally, exploring and pursuing alternative funding sources, including partnerships with private foundations and the finance sector, would be beneficial. For this purpose, it is recommended to develop an agenda for sharing experiences with other UNDP offices in upper-middle-income countries on diversifying large government cost-sharing portfolios. For instance, UNDP in Mexico could be a good starting point given its recent success in accessing non-traditional funding sources. This would strengthen UNDP's programmatic cohesiveness in Argentina and put UNDP in a better position to support the country in solving structural problems affecting its development. In that sense, a cross-cutting action that could guide programming in the next cycle, would be to accompany the country in its process of accession to the OECD.

**Management response: Fully Accepted**



◀ Recommendation 1 (cont'd)

| Key action(s)  | Time frame    | Responsible unit(s)                                    | Tracking* |          |
|--|---------------|--|-----------|----------|
|  |               |  | Comments  | Status   |
| 1.1 Formulate and implement the resource mobilization and communication strategy that accompanies the new CPD 2026-2030, with an emphasis on the development solutions that UNDP can offer and making visible the added value of the organization. | June 2026     | Representation, Programme Unit, M&E and Communications |           | Initiate |
| 1.2 Establish internal collaboration mechanisms to identify new programmatic opportunities accompanied by an innovative business model that responds to the country's emerging needs.  | December 2026 | Representation, Programme Unit, M&E and Operations     |           |          |
| 1.3 Map the opportunities for collaboration opened up by the OECD accession roadmap in conjunction with the portfolio of services offered by UNDP and the experience that can be provided from RBLAC and HQ.                                       | 2026 - 2030   | Representation, Programme Unit                         |           |          |
| 1.4 Continue updating knowledge products in Human Development, with a focus on products that are widely disseminated and expand available indicators, such as the new human development index at the departmental level.                           | December 2026 | Representation, Human Development                      |           |          |

## RECOMMENDATION 2:



UNDP should strengthen the internal coherence of its programme, taking advantage of identified opportunities to support the country in the delivery of basic services and socio-economic development. It should take advantage of the holistic approach to development that the new ministerial human capital structure can bring to enhance the desired human development and poverty reduction outcomes. It should promote interprovincial development solutions and facilitate sharing successful practices in institutional modernization, health and economic growth.

UNDP should continue to strengthen the internal coherence and synergies of its programme, to move beyond a level of results limited to the scope of individual projects and expand the impact of portfolios. UNDP should leverage aspects of the current political context to support broader interventions aligned with its focus on human development and multidimensional poverty reduction, such as collaborating with the unified ministry overseeing Children, Adolescents and Family; Education; Labour, Employment and Social Security. In addition, it should further leverage the knowledge and best practices gained in supporting the health sector to replicate these efforts, including UNDP's support for improving logistics and the distribution of medical supplies. UNDP should leverage the government's new openness to private sector collaboration for economic development to enhance its growth, productivity and competitiveness programmes, focusing on women's economic empowerment and the green economy.

### Management response: Fully Accepted



| Key action(s)   | Time frame    | Responsible unit(s)            | Tracking |        |
|---|---------------|--------------------------------|----------|--------|
|   |               |                                | Comments | Status |
| 2.1 Strengthen technical support to the Ministry of Human Capital through partnerships with academia and civil society to advance evidence-based policy analysis and recommendations on food security, improve programme targeting and promote interprovincial learning and inclusive development strategies. | June 2026     | Programme Unit                 |          |        |
| 2.2 Design and implement a pilot programme with the private sector and civil society, using innovative financial instruments to promote inclusive and scalable solutions that improve productivity and social inclusion, ensuring participation and equitable access.   | December 2026 | Representation, Programme Unit |          |        |



◀ Recommendation 2 (cont'd)

| Key action(s)   | Time frame    | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking |        |
|---|---------------|---------------------|----------|--------|
|   |               |                     | Comments | Status |
| 2.3 Develop and implement digital solutions that strengthen the management of social programmes and the monitoring of results, promoting productive, financial and digital inclusion, especially for women, and strengthening the digital capacities of local and provincial governments for more efficient service delivery. | December 2027 | Programme Unit      |          |        |
| 2.4 Provide technical support to promote innovation and institutional adaptation, ensuring alignment with the integrated ministerial structure, coherence with interprovincial development priorities, and the generation of synergies between institutional modernization, health and economic growth.                       | June 2026     | Programme Unit      |          |        |

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**



**UNDP Country Office should focus its efforts in strengthening private sector support in environmentally sustainable solutions, promoting circular economy, green city models and sustainable finance. Also, it should seek to play a more prominent role in providing solutions to common problems between provinces, as well as those of a transboundary nature.**

UNDP may increase its engagement with the private sector by outlining the potential benefits of climate-smart adaptation policies and investments in efficient agriculture and livestock, focusing on effects on employment, economic development and climate resilience. In addition, and building on its local and global experience, UNDP should promote wider initiatives in terms of circular economy, electromobility and green city models. It should promote the potential of green finance to generate conservation and biodiversity impacts, as demonstrated in this programme cycle. UNDP should take a more active role in addressing interprovincial issues like forest management and transboundary challenges, considering environmental, economic and security impacts, while improving UNDP multi-country and inter-office cooperation

**Management response: Fully Accepted**



◀ Recommendation 3 (cont'd)

| Key action(s)   | Time frame     | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking |        |
|---|----------------|---------------------|----------|--------|
|   |                |                     | Comments | Status |
| 3.1 Develop and implement a strategy to link up with the private sector aimed at promoting climate-smart practices in agriculture, livestock, renewable energies and sustainable infrastructure, facilitating spaces for multi-stakeholder dialogue, promoting national and provincial priorities (nationally determined contributions, biodiversity strategies and climate plans). | June 2026      | Programme Unit      |          |        |
| 3.2 Provide technical support to promote pilot circular economy initiatives and sustainable city models. Promote collaboration with banks to incorporate sustainability criteria into lending policies and design financial products that support investments in the circular economy and projects with a focus on biodiversity.  | September 2026 | Programme Unit      |          |        |
| 3.3 Promote the development of innovative financial instruments—such as biodiversity credits, blended finance schemes and sustainable bonds—in alliance with strategic partners in the sector and strengthen cooperation with financial institutions to expand green banking practices and ensure measurable environmental and socio-economic results.                              | September 2027 | Programme Unit      |          |        |
| 3.4 Provide assistance to strategic partners to strengthen cooperation mechanisms in the area of sustainable forest management and land management, with UNDP acting as a facilitator between jurisdictions.  | September 2027 | Programme Unit      |          |        |

## RECOMMENDATION 4:

**UNDP should intensify support for justice sector reform, efforts to combat violence and initiatives promoting transparency and fighting corruption. Additionally, it should assist with state administrative reforms, digitalizing public services and strengthening the civil service.**

Regarding governance and institutional modernization, UNDP should continue to use the entry point of digitalization of services, with greater emphasis on the perspective of citizen participation, transparency and governance. There is a window of opportunity to decide how artificial intelligence is to be incorporated and used in institutional frameworks, as the latest UNDP Human Development Report has just pointed out at the global level. UNDP should take advantage of the window of opportunity to boost the fight against corruption and tax fraud through technological innovation. In addition, UNDP should support the country in restoring the legitimacy of its institutions, both in the executive branch (e.g., by reforming the civil service and its administrative processes) and in the judiciary (e.g., by improving access, strengthening victim protection mechanisms and reaching out to citizens).

### Management response: **Fully Accepted**

| Key action(s)  | Time frame    | Responsible unit(s)            | Tracking |        |
|--|---------------|--------------------------------|----------|--------|
|  |               |                                | Comments | Status |
| 4.1 With the support of BPPS and RBLAC, the office will formulate an offer on the aspects of digitalization, use of artificial intelligence and strengthening of the civil service.  | December 2026 | Representation, Programme Area |          |        |
| 4.2 Continue to support the justice sector and its reform through the implementation of normative and regulatory frameworks that strengthen justice, security and equality before the law, promoting environments free of violence, harassment and discrimination, both in physical and digital spaces.  | December 2027 | Representation, Programme Area |          |        |
| 4.3 Define UNDP's portfolio of services in support of administrative reforms through the strengthening of public management and institutional modernization, promoting the adoption of innovative regulatory frameworks, processes and tools—including digital transformation—that improve transparency, efficiency and equity in access to justice and public services. | December 2027 | Representation, Programme Area |          |        |

◀ Recommendation 4 (cont'd)

| Key action(s)   | Time frame | Responsible unit(s)                | Tracking |        |
|---|------------|------------------------------------|----------|--------|
|   |            |                                    | Comments | Status |
| 4.4 Provide technical assistance for the design, acquisition and implementation of digital solutions that strengthen transparency, integrity and institutional efficiency—including anti-fraud software, infrastructure and devices for the management of criminal cases and court hearings, as well as digital platforms that promote Argentine export goods | 2026-2027  | Programme Unit and Operations Unit |          |        |

**RECOMMENDATION 5:**



**UNDP should strengthen its capacity to measure the added value it brings in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in project management while strengthening its programme and project results frameworks and evaluation systems to better capture the impact of its interventions.**

Given the common weaknesses identified in all programme areas in this area, UNDP should invest in strengthening internal capacities, both operationally and programmatically, to enable the programme as a whole to record the elements with which it contributes value to the country. UNDP should promote strategic alliances with academia, along the lines of the one developed with the Observatory of the Argentine Social Debt of the Catholic University, to strengthen the evaluation frameworks of the different social policies that UNDP supports and to ensure that these aspects are ideally reflected in project documents and with allocated budget allocations. UNDP should institutionalize the good practice of systematically generating annual reports for external dissemination, paying special attention to and differentiating between two levels: 1) results in terms of institutional changes and improvements and 2) effects on people's quality of life as a result of these changes.

**Management response : Fully Accepted**



| Key action(s)  | Time frame | Responsible unit(s)                    | Tracking |        |
|--|------------|--|----------|--------|
|  |            |  | Comments | Status |
| 5.1 Define and implement the CPD Evaluation Plan 2026-30, incorporating the evaluation of strategic projects, and ensure the effective implementation of evaluation recommendations through tripartite meetings. | June 2030  | Representation, Programme Unit and M&E |          |        |

◀ Recommendation 5 (cont'd)

| Key action(s)   | Time frame    | Responsible unit(s)                             | Tracking |        |
|---|---------------|---|----------|--------|
|   |               |   | Comments | Status |
| 5.2 Develop internal capacities through training for Programmes, Operations and Projects on results-based management and monitor the use of the evidence provided by monitoring instruments in decision-making. | December 2026 | M&E, Programme and Operations Unit              |          |        |
| 5.3 Incorporate into the monitoring and follow-up processes measurable mechanisms for the identification of UNDP's added value in each project or portfolio.  | December 2027 | Representation, Programme Unit, M&E             |          |        |
| 5.4 Generate an internal record of value-added opportunities in projects and programmatic activities and their evolution throughout the programme cycle.  | December 2026 | Representation, M&E, Programme Unit, Operations |          |        |

\* Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

# ANNEXES



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the Evaluation Resource Centre website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/25269>

- Annex 1.** Evaluation terms of reference
- Annex 2.** Evaluation framework
- Annex 3.** List of projects reviewed
- Annex 4.** Documentation and bibliography
- Annex 5.** Status of CPD indicators matrix
- Annex 6.** CPD financial analysis
- Annex 7.** Country Programme Performance Rating




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